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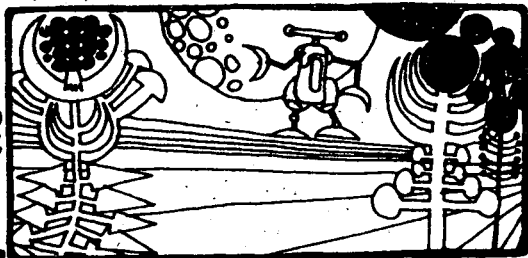
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TED
WHITE

EDITORIAL



WELCOME to our 50th Anniversary issue. This issue marks not only a milestone in the history of this magazine, but a milestone in the history of science fiction.

Before 1926 there was no science fiction.

There *were* occasional "scientific romances", the works of authors who, like Verne, were as likely to follow up a novel like *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (science fiction by today's definition) with a sequel like *Mysterious Island* (largely an adventure story). But the *genre* of science fiction did not then exist. When an author wrote a novel in which a hidden land of dinosaurs was discovered (as Arthur Conan Doyle did) he did not immediately categorize it in his mind as a genre work. It was a novel, no more and no less.

AMAZING STORIES changed all that. When the magazine's founder, Hugo Gernsback, launched it he did not have the phrase, "science fiction," with which to dub its contents but he *did* call the fiction he published "scientifiction," a close cousin indeed. (As Isaac Asimov notes in his story herein, Gernsback originally wanted to call his magazine *Scientifiction*; it was apparently an unpopular choice and he abandoned it as a title.)

Gernsback saw AMAZING as a place in which to gather together stories of miraculous inventions and the frontiers of science. He wanted to give his readers the same sense of wonder he himself experienced from the explorations of science and invention (by no

coincidence an earlier, non-fiction Gernsback magazine was called *Science & Invention*; it was the *Mechanix Illustrated* of its day). By sugarcoating the pill of science with fiction he hoped to excite an interest in science among his younger readers. His motives were at least in part evangelical.

His actual accomplishment was not the one he intended—at least not in a primary sense, although many scientists have noted that sf was an early stimulus toward a career in science—but it was far greater and more sweeping: Gernsback accidentally created a new branch of literature, giving it both name and identity.

Proto-sf had existed for years, of course, as noted. Indeed, scholars in the field like to trace the antecedents of science fiction back to the ancient Romans at the very least. But proto-sf was *not* science fiction for the simple reason that neither its authors nor its readers recognized it as such.

When Gernsback founded AMAZING he created a place in which science fiction could exist and grow and develop traditions. When other magazines subsequently appeared which also published science fiction (*Wonder*, *Astounding*) they legitimized science fiction as a genre.

The importance of this move is two-fold.

On the one hand, as modern authors within the field are proud of complaining, science fiction was "ghettoized." It became a distinguish-

(cont. on page 120)

AMAZING



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Isaac Asimov sold his second story to this magazine some thirty five years ago—and has, since then, established himself as one of the world's three best-known and best-liked sf authors (the other two are Arthur C. Clarke and Robert A. Heinlein). He contributes a monthly science column to The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, but his forays into fiction have grown increasingly rare. It is with special pleasure, then, that we present not only a new Asimov story, but one written specifically for this Anniversary issue, in which we are treated to the—

BIRTH OF A NOTION

ISAAC ASIMOV

THAT THE first inventor of a workable time machine was a science fiction enthusiast is by no means a coincidence. It was inevitable. Why else should an otherwise sane physicist even dare track down the various out-of-the-way theories that seemed to point toward maneuverability in time in the very teeth of General Relativity?

It took energy, of course. Everything takes energy. But Simeon Weill was prepared to pay the price. Anything (well, almost anything) to make his hidden science fictional dream come true.

The trouble was that there was no way of controlling either the direction or distance through which one was chronologically thrust. It was all the result of random temporal collisions of the harnessed tachyons. Weill could make mice and even rabbits disappear—but future or past, he couldn't say. One mouse reappeared so he must have travelled but a short way into the past—and it seemed quite unharmed. The others? Who could tell?

He devised an automatic release for the machine. Theoretically, it would reverse the push (whatever the push might be) and bring back the object (from whichever direction and whatever distance it had gone). It didn't always work, but five rabbits were brought back unharmed.

If he could only make the release fool-proof, Weill would have tried it himself. He was *dying* to try it—which was not the proper reaction of a theoretical physicist, but was the absolutely predictable emotion of a crazed s.f. fan who was particularly fond of the space-oprish productions of some decades before the present year of 1976.

It was inevitable, then, that the accident should happen. On no account would he have stepped between the tempodes with conscious determination. He knew the chances were about two in five he would not return. On the other hand, he was *dying* to try it, so he tripped over his own big feet and went staggering between those tempodes as a result of total accident. —But are there really

Illustrated by STEPHEN E. FABIAN



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accidents?

He might have been hurled into the past or into the future. As it happened, he was hurled into the past.

He might have been hurled uncounted thousands of years into the past or one and a half days. As it happened, he was hurled fifty-one years into the past to a time when the Teapot Dome Scandal was burning brightly but the nation was keeping Cool with Coolidge and knew that nobody in the world could lick Jack Dempsey.

But there was something that his theories didn't tell Weill. He knew what could happen to the particles themselves, but there was no way of predicting what would happen to the relationships between the various particles. And where are relationships more complex than in the brain?

So what happened was that as Weill moved backward through time, his mind unreeled. Not all the way, fortunately, since Weill had not yet been conceived in the year before America's Sesquicentennial, and a brain with less than no development would have been a distinct handicap.

It unreeled haltingly, and partially, and clumsily, and when Weill found himself on a park bench not far from his 1975 home in lower Manhattan, where he experimented in dubious symbiosis with New York University, he found himself in the year 1925 with an abysmally aching head and no very clear idea as to what anything was all about.

He found himself staring at a man of about forty, hair slicked down, cheekbones prominent, beaky nose, who was sharing the same bench with him.

The man looked concerned. He said, "Where did you come from? You were not here a moment ago?" He

had a distinct Teutonic accent.

Weill wasn't sure. He couldn't remember. But one phrase seemed to stick through the chaos within his skull even though he wasn't sure what it meant.

"Time machine," he gasped.

The other man stiffened. He said, "Do you read pseudo-scientific romances?"

"What?" said Weill.

"Have you read H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*?"

The repetition of the phrase seemed to soothe Weill a bit. The pain in his head lessened. The name, Wells, seemed familiar, or was that his own name? No, his own name was Weill.

"Wells?" he said. "I am Weill."

The other man thrust out a hand. "I am Hugó Gernsback. I write pseudo-scientific romances at times, but of course, it is not right to say 'pseudo.' That makes it seem there is something fake about it. That is not so. It should be properly written and then it will be scientific fiction. I like to shorten that," his dark eyes gleamed, "to scientification."

"Yes," said Weill, trying desperately to collect shattered memories and unwound experiences and getting only moods and impressions. "Scientification. Better than pseudo. Still not quite—"

"If done well. Have you read my *Ralp 124C41* +?"

"Hugo Gernsback," said Weill, frowning, "Famous—"

"In a small way," said the other, nodding his head. "I have been publishing magazines on radio and on electrical inventions for years. Have you read *Science and Invention*?"

Weill caught the word 'invention' and somehow that left him on the edge of understanding what he had

meant by 'time machine.' He grew eager and said, "Yes, yes."

"And what do you think of the scientificfiction that I add in each issue?"

Scientificfiction again. The word had a soothing effect on him and yet it was not quite right. Something more—Not quite—

He said it, "Something more. Not quite—"

"Not quite enough? Yes, I've been thinking that. Last year I sent out circulars asking for subscriptions to a magazine to contain nothing but scientificfiction. I would call it *Scientificfiction*. The results were very disappointing. How would you explain that?"

Weill didn't hear him. He was still concentrating on the word 'scientificfiction' which didn't seem quite right, but he couldn't understand why it didn't.

He said, "The name is not right."

"Not right for a magazine? Maybe that's so. I have not thought of a good name; something to catch the eye, to get across just what the reader will get, and what he will want. That is it. If I could get a good name I would start the magazine and not worry about circulars. I would not ask anything. I would simply put it on every news-stand in the United States next spring; that is all."

Weill stared at him blankly.

The man said, "Of course, the stories I want should teach science even as they amuse and excite the reader. They should open to him the vast scope of the future: Airplanes will cross the Atlantic non-stop."

"Airplanes?" Weill caught a fugitive vision of a large metal whale, rising on its own exhaust. A moment, and it was gone. He said, "Large ones, carrying hundred of people faster than sound."

"Of course. Why not? Staying in touch at all times by radio."

"Satellites."

"What?" It was the other man's turn to look puzzled.

"Radio waves bounce off an artificial satellite in space."

The other man nodded vigorously. "I predicted the use of radio waves to detect at a distance in *Ralph 124C41+*. Space mirrors? I've predicted that. And television, of course. And energy from the atom."

Weill was galvanized. Images flashed before his mind's eye in no suitable order. "Atom," he said, "Yes. Nuclear bombs."

"Radium," said the other man, complacently.

"Plutonium," said Weill.

"What?"

"Plutonium. And nuclear fusion. Imitating the Sun. Nylon and plastics. Pesticides to kill the insects. Computers to kill the problems."

"Computers? You mean robots?"

"Pocket computers," said Weill, enthusiastically. "Little things. Hold them in your hand and work out problems. Little radios. Hold them in your hand, too. Cameras take photographs and develop them right in the box. Holographs. Three dimensional pictures."

The other man said, "Do you write scientificfiction?"

Weill didn't listen. He kept trying to trap the images. They were growing clearer. "Skyscrapers," he said, "Aluminum and glass. Highways. Color television. Man on the Moon. Probes to Jupiter."

"Man on the moon," said the other man. "Jules Verne. Do you read Jules Verne?"

Weill shook his head. It was quite clear now. The mind was healing a bit. "Stepping down onto the Moon's

(cont. on page 19)

NATURAL ADVANTAGE

LESTER DEL REY

When Lester del Rey was the Guest of Honor at the 1967 World Science Fiction Convention, he responded to the growing schism between the so-called New Wave and Old Guard schools of science fiction by calling for a return to an affirmation of humanity. Of the story which follows, he says, "I've tried to make this one of the older, optimistic stories. Any time a science fiction magazine can exist for 50 years, it should make us all feel a bit more inspired about the human ability to come through." Certainly del Rey's own career, which began in the 1930's and continues today, inspires the same confidence: his novel, Nerves (first written as a novelette in the mid-forties and published as a novel in the fifties) accurately forecast the current public furor over nuclear power; his most recent novel, Pstalemate, is one of the most compelling works of the seventies.

Illustrated by RICK BRYANT

STAR CAPTAIN Anthor Sef sighed heavily and put down the trinoculars through which he had been staring. Seemingly above him, the pitted, airless satellite of the clouded planet glared coldly. He shut his eyes to rest them, then turned back to his control seat.

"No evidence of mines or colonies," he said. "If they have space flight, it must be in its infancy. That is, if there's any intelligent life at all on the primary."

"But the radio signals!" Timas Biir protested.

Theoretically, Biir should not have been in the control room; he was only cook and general handyman. But the engineer Sef had drawn for this trip was too taciturn to be company. The captain stared at the little man, surprised at the eagerness on the other's face. Biir was almost an anachronism,

a left-over from the ancient family of heralds. Over his short snout and just above his third eye was a bulging forehead that held his enlarged speech center, a reminder of the days when there were a hundred languages on Rum and a herald must know them all.

Sef nodded slowly. "Yes, the radio signals." He shrugged and set the controls to take them close to the primary while Biir picked up the trinoculars and stood staring through the transparent wall of the control room.

The doubly-damned radio signals! Sef sighed again. One of the exploring ships had spotted a cloud of anti-matter particles heading for a G-type star and mapped it as routine. It was only when they were heading away that they had received faint radio signals that might indicate intelligence

on a planet around the star. As a result of their report, Sef had been ordered to detour on his trip to the farthest colony, adding a year to the fifteen the trip already took—almost a tenth of a lifetime.

Maybe he should have turned down the job; most star captains refused the long voyage. But it meant promotion above what his equal time in normal voyages would have brought.

"See anything?" he asked. They were approaching the planet now, making an easy half thousand miles a second.

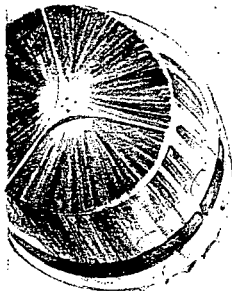
"Lights maybe, on the darkened section. I'm not sure," Biir answered. Then he gasped faintly. "Wait—a moving glint! Outside the atmosphere!"

Sef set the controls to bring them to a halt and took the trinoculars. The precise wording Biir had used gave the velocity and curvature of the thing he had seen, and it could only be something orbiting the planet. The captain followed the other's pointing finger. The glint was showing clearly now, indicating something that was reflecting the sunlight as metal might do. His mind delineated its orbit, but he checked it, setting the delay line in the nerves from his third eye to longer and shorter time span. Then he went back to the controls and set up a course that would match orbits with whatever was there, slightly more than two hundred miles above the planet.

As they drew nearer, Sef could see that it was clearly an artificial satellite, shaped like a doughnut and spinning on a hub. Biir's exclamations drew Nuran Velos from the engine room to watch. The engineer scowled, pointing to the hub. "Control rockets. Look chemical. Primitive!"

Sef grunted. Primitive or not, it

K. Egan



meant space travel of a sort. And his orders were to warn them, in that case. The cloud of anti-matter would begin striking their star in about ten more years, setting it to blazing so fiercely that no planet could support life. Excitement over the possibility of finding the first alien intelligence had run so high in the Council that a rescue mission had been considered. But too few ships were at home and the needs of the farthest colony had prevailed. Still, the aliens had to be warned.

Across the control room, the radio broke into sudden loud noises as Biir fiddled with it. The little man began yelling into it, though no real communication was possible. Sef could see no sign of weaponry, but he approached cautiously until he had matched course five hundred feet below the hub. After that, there was nothing to do but wait.

It was nearly two hours later when the hub showed activity. Something opened and a figure came out in a space suit, carrying a hand rocket and trailing a line behind. Two arms, two legs, a bulge for a head—the simplest way for evolution to produce an intelligent land-dweller, of course. Shorter than the men of Ruum, but not greatly so.

Velos went to the emergency airlock and began opening the outer flap. The figure changed course to reach it, stopping to fix the line before entering. The airlock cycled, and the creature moved into the control room, carrying a box and studying a set of dials. It nodded, threw back the helmet and began removing its suit, its attention never wavering from the men of Ruum. It wore some kind of artificial covering, probably because it had hair only on top of its head. The naked skin was pinkish tan instead of

a proper dark brown. There was almost no muzzle, and the nose stuck out above the mouth. But the shocking detail was that it had only two eyes in its small head.

"Mammalian female," Biir said in amazement. "But only two breasts."

The creature looked at him, frowning. "*My name is Ellen Richards, and I'm supposed to welcome you to our world,*" she said. The meaningless sounds were in a voice with none of the higher tones of Ruumian; the fundamentals seemed limited to a range of only a few thousand herz.

Biir began trying to establish a few words with her, but gave up. "I don't think she hears half of what I say," he commented. He tried to shift to her words, frowning as he attempted to make sense of them.

Then she stretched her mouth into an upward curve and held out a small dial on her wrist, pointing to the hands that circled it and making motions. She pointed back to the satellite, motioned over the dial, and made a sweeping gesture. Even Sef could see she was indicating that she'd leave and be back in—hmmm—about three hours. Their time units were shorter than his, but not hard to translate roughly.

There were a lot of signals in various radio frequencies going on between the satellite and the planet after she had gone. Some decoded to the sounds she had made; others on different frequencies were meaningless to Sef. He gave up listening when Biir brought in lunch.

Establishing communication was going to be a problem, Sef realized. Well, that was why Biir had been sent on this trip; he had the brain development to handle language skills and memory. Sef forgot about it and turned his thoughts to the strange

creature with only two eyes. Two! Enough for spatial depth perception, but not for time depth perception. Without the third eye and the brain development that integrated the extra, delayed vision, they could never see movement, never detect the exact curvature of the path of an object thrown at them, never determine precise velocities. How could such creatures have survived through their early development? They were a race of no real vision!

The female returned at the promised time, pulling a much heavier cord with her. Two others followed, and they began dragging boxes across space before entering the airlock. Once inside, she removed her suit, but they merely piled the boxes on the floor, stared at the Ruumians, and motioned that they were leaving. Males, Sef decided, wishing he could see their anatomy; but the coverings they wore in place of hair would have prevented that, anyhow.

The female opened one box and began lifting out volumes of bound sheets, all covered with marks in columns. She pointed to the radio that was faintly humming, then at the sheets. Sef considered it, then nodded, remembering with surprise that nodding was a gesture she had also used. It seemingly had meant the same as his, surprisingly. Anyhow, apparently she was trying to indicate that the printing on the sheets had been sent by radio from the planet and executed on the satellite. Sensible. So now they had a word list, for whatever good it might do.

Another box contained reels of tape. Velos examined it and nodded. "Magnetic film, I think. Too wide. Primitive."

The last box held a machine, about a foot square and two feet high. There

were switches and other indications that something inside was probably electronic. But above it, where dials should have been, was a strange blank face of glass. With a decent keyboard and numbered dials, it could have been a calculator like the one Velos used to solve arithmetical problems. She placed it on the table, inserted a reel, and pressed a switch.

Sef jumped, sucking in his breath. Where the blank glass had been was a little man of her race, not ten inches high! It wasn't a doll, either; it moved like a living thing. "One," the box said. "One and one are two. One and two are three." With each word, the top of the glass showed characters like those on the pages and the little man illustrated with his fingers.

Then Sef saw his mistake. There was time depth, but no spacial depth. It was as if a draftsman had drawn a schematic diagram of a creature for some odd reason, then filled in every detail of tone and color on the paper, and somehow made it move!

Velos shoved the captain aside and stared at the thing. For the first time, the engineer was clearly struck by emotion.

The female drew the hair ridges over her two eyes together, then reached to shut the machine off. She took something from a large pocket in the stuff she wore over her skin and held it out. It seemed merely a scrap of the odd paper on which the words were printed. The Velos turned it over and swore in amazement.

There was no depth, no movement. But when Sef closed his upper and one side eye, it began to make sense. It showed one of her people. But it was only fractions of an inch thick! "Picture," the girl said.

Biir examined it with less surprise.

"I've heard of draftsmen who play around with things like this experimentally. But the results always look flat and dead when they sketch anything but the simplest things. So does this, of course. But such detail!"

The female's eyebrows were still together, but she motioned to the machine, resetting the reel. She took the first volume and pointed to the words as the machine started from the beginning. Biir moved beside her and followed her motions carefully as she demonstrated the machine. When he nodded, she indicated the dial on her wrist again, then pointed to the airlock.

After she left, Biir stayed by the machine, sounding the words and studying the printed sheets. Several times he reset the tape. Then at last he put it aside and began on the next.

Sef left him alone with his job, trying to figure how they got the moving "pictures" onto the screen; it was too much for his imagination. For want of anything better, he began following the language lesson as Biir went back to the first reel again.

"Impossible," Biir said finally, as he reluctantly turned off the device and stretched his tired back. "Sef, they don't have any tense in their nouns and adjectives. Even the verbs have only past indefinite, present indefinite, and future indefinite. There is no real time sense at all. And yet, it seems to work. And the words! They make one word serve for every condition of a knife. One! Not a separate one for each type of motion of the knife. They must get by with less than five thousand basic words!"

"How many do we use?" Sef asked.

Biir thought it over. "Half a million basic, perhaps. A cultured man uses seven or eight times that many, counting all the finer shades. A good

herald used to know a million in twenty or so language. Sef, I can memorize these overnight!"

Sef nodded doubtfully. Even he, who hadn't finished language school and hadn't been permitted to begin his other education until he was eight years old, could force himself to learn a few thousand a day. He got up and started for his cabin to get some needed sleep. then he swore to himself and joined the cook again. The language was even crazier than Biir had said, but there was something fascinating about it. Finally, though, he gave up and left the little man busily hunting back and forth among his reels.

When the female came back the next shift, she looked at the mess of reels beside Biir and grasped. "What in *hell* did you do? Start from the wrong end?"

"*Hell* was not among the words," Biir said. "I did the—those things—from the top to the bottom the first time."

Surprisingly, Sef could understand. The words came too fast for him to follow easily, but he managed. It was worse than trying to talk baby language—but sense could be conveyed. He fumbled through his memory. "Why had you—you men things—this ready? Expecting—expected you us men things?"

She stared, then lifted her shoulders. "It was some project a student—a student in final education—did to get his degree—his right to be a teacher. We had the program sent up from Earth. It is called 'an attempt at devising a program of language instruction for hypothetical aliens—or some such.'"

Biir apparently understood enough of it to translate. Sef hesitated. Obviously, they could exchange informa-

tion, and it was now his duty to issue his warning and leave. But somehow, passing on the message that would doom most of this world—and probably the female—didn't come as easily as he had thought.

Velos gave him an excuse to ponder further by demanding to know how the pictures appeared on the screen. Sef listened absently as Biir struggled to translate. Apparently the fact that the creatures could see no time depth made them fond of images of themselves that no Ruumian could accept—dead, frozen ones. That led to photography. And when they had radio, they wanted better. As a result, they invented television and videotape. He filed the words in his memory.

"All that in such a little box?" Velos asked doubtfully.

"Heavens, most of the box is empty." She pulled her eyebrows together, then began trying to explain how thousands of transistors and other parts could be put on a tiny chip by things called photo-reduction and photoetching. More pictures!

She gave up when Velos wanted more details. "You should talk to the scientists, though maybe I could get you some books from the library. I only work in administration."

Sef sighed. He could put it off no longer. "Scientists? Men that look at stars, think how to go through space?" She nodded, and he stood up. "Then take me to them. I know bad things about your star. I must talk with scientists!"

She seemed doubtful at first, but as Biir passed on a little more information, she nodded. It would take time to get the scientists together. She would give a signal from the hub of the station when everything was ready.

Velos watched her leave and turned to Sef. "I want to go with you." He listened to Sef's refusal unhappily, but nodded. Someone had to stay on the ship, and Biir was needed to translate. "Then get me those books she mentioned—all you can. Somehow I'll learn to read them!"

Sef and Biir were already suited up when Ellen's signal came. They pulled themselves across on the line and followed her through the airlock. Inside, there was a strange odor. Well, if she could breathe his air safely, hers should not harm him. He followed her, studying the alien technology as they passed upward through the station. Maybe Velos should have come. But that could be remedied later.

About twenty of the creatures were waiting, a mixture of male and female. Ellen silenced them and led Sef toward a position at the front of the crowded room.

He gave them the message and the facts, undiluted. The great cloud of anti-matter would strike their star in ten of their years, triggering it into dangerous activity; and some of the cloud would strike their atmosphere, causing lethal amounts of gamma radiation. He gave them the readings of the first ship to discover the cloud, and tried to explain why his people could do little but warn them. There was no way to send a signal across more than a hundred light years of space, nor did they have ships enough to rescue this world.

"Your ship is here!" someone yelled, and Sef had expected it.

But another man rose quickly. "We know the size of that ship. We couldn't put more than a hundred people aboard with supplies to last a year. That's not nearly enough to insure a gene pool that has a chance of

survival for the race. And damn it, I resent having the suggestion made to a—a man who has come here to warn us!”

There were cries of what must be approval. There was no panic, so far as Sef could see. Maybe there would be when the general population learned the truth, but these were highly trained and self-controlled individuals.

Eventually, he had answered all their questions as best he could. Some of them were already leaving the room as Ellen led Sef and Biir away.

Back on his ship, Sef sat trying to sort out what he had learned and raging at his futility. He had found himself liking and respecting those beings. The idea of having the first intelligent race his people had discovered die before they could meet properly was unthinkable. Yet it was hopeless.

The aliens had only rockets, powered by chemical means now. And while Sef had learned they had crude fusion power, they had no good way to apply it as thrust.

Damn it, as the man had said, it was unfair! His people were no better than these, probably—certainly no more intelligent.

Yet his race had been given a natural advantage these beings could never have. His kind saw time and evolved complex brain structures to utilize that sense of time because some three-eyed ancestral form had survived eons ago. It was because of that gift that they had been able to develop the exchange forces that held time inside their ships to the normal rate, while distorting it externally until their ships could cross space twenty times faster than light. And it was that natural advantage that had let them learn the nature of time in

the atomic nucleus, to turn all of any mass into pure energy.

By the Ancient Dust, if it could have helped them, he would have dumped his cargo and taken all he could to the nearest habitable planet—the colony world toward which he was headed. Then they could have killed him on the colony, if they liked; a race was more important than one man!

Velos came in on his dark mood, asking if he had secured any of the books. Sef started to brush him aside.

Then he swore, and made up his mind. “No, but you’ll get them—everything they have,” he promised.

It couldn’t help the race of beings who called themselves human. There wasn’t time enough. But it might give them hope during the ugly years when they needed it. He could do that much, at least. And if the Council disagreed with his decision, let the Council do what they liked to him.

Sef had slept and eaten when a delegation came to his ship. There were only three of them, and one was the man who had rebuked the other.

“We’ve checked discretely,” that man—Brewster, he called himself—announced. “And we’ve found more evidence than we like. There have been reports of strong X-ray emissions in the area where you place the cloud for several years. Probably caused when it hits the dust in space. And it’s moving as you said. Now, how much can you tell us—or show us—of your ship? And can we build ones much bigger?”

“You don’t have time enough!” Sef protested when it had been translated. “Even experts take years to build one ship.”

“When there’s no other solution, we’ll make time!”

Sef nodded. Now he should explain

enough of the time fields to show them how impossible it all was. Or he should promise them, and then flee into space. The Council would never approve of any other decision.

"You can't build bigger ships," he said at last. "We've tried, and the fields we use simply collapse beyond a certain size. But while I don't know enough to help you, I carry a good technical library on board. I'll trade you my books for yours. But I warn you that our language may prove impossible for you to learn."

Another man grinned suddenly. "Translate your thousand most important words and we'll dig the rest out with our computers. Give us your basic mathematics, and we'll solve the rest."

Biir looked at the captain sadly when the men were gone. "You will regret that," he warned.

"Would you have done otherwise?" Sef asked, and there was no answer.

Later, boxes of things called microfiche copies and readers for the three of them began coming from the station. Men came aboard with equipment and began making microfiche copies of the ship's three hundred odd volumes, while Biir and Velos slaved over the word list and mathematics introduction. There were far more books from the station than Sef had thought possible. Some were stored in an empty fuel hold, but the control room was still littered with boxes.

Brewster came last, and Sef let the man take and squeeze his hand in a gesture that was obviously meant as friendship. Then he went to the control board and began setting up their course for the colony, more than two years away. There was still ten years of traveling before they would see Ruum again.

At least, they would be less bored than usual. Velos was already moving toward the thing with the screen, to attempt learning enough English to read the technical books. And he and Biir could learn to read the others. It would keep them busy. And if the race on the planet behind them had to perish, at least someone would remember them and carry back their records to be preserved on Ruum.

By the time they reached the colony, they had decided to use nothing but English among themselves; it was not as bad as it had seemed. Only rarely was it necessary to resort to Ruumian words to express some exact meaning. And such use increased their fluency. It came as almost a surprise when they landed to hear again the speech of Ruum.

There were more shocking things, however. The colony was going sour. The land under cultivation was hardly more than that shown on the maps of a century ago. There was barely enough of the needed silver mined and smelted to fill the hold of the ship. And the men were sullen, grumbling about everything; some even tried to bribe Sef to take them back with him.

The colony was too far from Ruum, and the ships that offered the only communication were too rare. Anyhow, Sef suspected that the men who had volunteered to come so far away from their native world on the first three fleets had not been the most suitable ones. There was no pride in them now. They were uncurried and most of them stank of accumulated dirtiness.

It was good to watch the world fade behind them and head directly toward Ruum. The three men settled back into their routine. Sef still had a long ways to go before he could begin to

appreciate the material that was supposed to be fiction. The history books had been hard enough.

Biiir called their attention to the date at dinner. The ten years had passed, and the cloud must be striking the star the men called the Sun. They ate little that time, and Sef spent long hours afterward staring at the star of Ruum only months ahead of them. Finally he found a novel on the last days of Pompeii. Somehow, it was much easier to understand than on his first reading of it.

By the time they were within radio hailing distance, they began packing the microfiche boxes and trying to tidy up the control room for the routine inspection that would follow the normal perfunctory acknowledgement and congratulations. Ruum had known space flight too long to be excited. They were assigned their orbit around the planet and told to wait. And the waiting dragged on, which was not normal.

When the little ship drew near them and began to match orbits, it was not the regular type of inspector's gig, either. Instead, it was a two-man ship, and it carried the bands of distinctive color that could only be used on the specials assigned to members of the Council.

"Damn!" Sef said, the word coming automatically to his lips now.

Biiir stared out at the ship as it matched course and began sending out a passenger tube toward their airlock. "They couldn't have learned about your decision, Sef. That's impossible. It must be some special inspection."

Sef nodded, unconvinced. He'd thought on numerous occasions of what he must tell the Council about his turning all their scientific knowledge over to an alien race. But his

plans were still unformed. Perhaps there was no way he could justify it.

The the airlock cycled, and a short figure in an alien spacesuit entered, beginning at once to remove the helmet.

"Ellen Richards!"

"It's Ellen Farnum now," she told him. "I got married. Sef, it's good to see you again."

He let her take his hand and squeeze it, staring at her, puzzled vaguely by her accent. Then he realized that the accent must be his, not hers.

"You built a ship," he guessed at last. "But so quickly . . ."

She nodded, making a sound that his reading told him must be laughter. "Well, let's say we coverted a ship. It's over there, in a Trojan orbit with your little moon. You know about such orbits?"

"Equilateral triangle of two satellites to the primary," Velos said.

She nodded. "Over there. You can just see it shining, if you know where to look. We hollowed out an asteroid named Juno to give us living quarters and came in that. And that gives us all the fuel we can ever use to drive it. After all, it's more than a hundred miles in diameter. Of course, your Council was a little shocked when we first took up orbit. But once we got into communication with them and they picked up enough English to begin exchanging knowledge, they were delighted. One of them sent his private ship and chauffeur to bring me out. I was determined to be the first to greet you."

Sef held up a hand to stop the flow of words that came faster than he could assimilate, but it was Velos again who interrupted. "Impossible. No field can cover such a diameter. It—"

"Not the field you used, of course." She frowned a moment. "All right, I'll try to explain. After we had a chance to learn your time theories, we found we had a big advantage over you. The way you see conditioned you to think of time in only one way—sort of in pictures. It was like the men who tried to understand the atom by picturing it, which won't work. So we, working without any preconceptions, found other ways of treating your theories. The one we found gets better as it gets bigger. And faster, too. We made the trip in four months, taking it easy."

"With how many people?" Sef asked. He was remembering Brewster's statement about the size of population needed to keep the gene pool of the race at a survival level. But

with a whole planetoid to carry them here, there could be far more than enough people saved from the disaster of their world.

Her answer surprised him. "About eighty."

He sighed, and heard Biir's echoing sigh beside him.

"Only eighty—out of all your billions," the little man said softly.

She stared at them as if unaware of their meaning. Then she laughed again, easily, without a tinge of sorrow.

"Oh, I see. No, this was only a little trip to establish relations with your world—and to thank you, Sef. We moved Earth, the Sun and the planets out to a safe place almost two years ago."

—LESTER DEL REY

Birth of A Notion (cont. from page 9)
survive on television. Everyone watching. And pictures of Mars. No canals on Mars."

"No canals on Mars?" said the other man, astonished. "They have been seen."

"No canals," said Weill, firmly. "Volcanoes. The biggest. Canyons the biggest. Transistors, lasers, tachyons. Trap the tachyons. Make them push against time. Move through time. Move through time. A—ma—"

Weill's voice was fading and his outlines trembled. It so happened that the other man looked away at this moment, staring into the blue sky, and muttering, "Tachyons? What is he saying?"

He was thinking that if a stranger he met casually in the park was so interested in scientifiction, it might be a good sign that it was time for the magazine? And then he remembered he had no name and dismissed the

notion regretfully.

He looked back in time to hear Weill's last words, "Tachyonic time travel—an—amazing—stor—y—" And he was gone, snapping back to his own time.

HUGO GERNSBACK stared in horror at the place where the man had been. He hadn't seen him come and now he really hadn't seen him go. His mind rejected the actual disappearance. How strange a man—his clothes were oddly cut, come to think of it, and his words were wild and whirling.

The stranger himself had said it—an amazing story. His last words.

And then Gernsback muttered the phrase under his breath, "Amazing story. —*Amazing Stories?*"

A smile tugged at the corners of his mouth.

—ISAAC ASIMOV

FRITZ LEIBER

THE DEATH OF PRINCES

Fritz Leiber contributes a regular column, Fantasy Books, to our companion magazine, FANTASTIC STORIES; his swashbuckling heroes, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, have won him a wide audience in the fantasy field. But Leiber is also a past master of science fiction—his early-fifties "Coming Attraction" is still highly regarded—and in this story, written for our Anniversary issue, proves he's lost none of his touch . . .

Illustrated by RICHARD OLSEN

EVER SINCE the discovery Hal and I made last night, or rather the amazing explanation we worked out for an accumulated multitude of curious facts, covering them all (the tentative solution to a riddle that's been a lifetime growing, you might say) I have been very much concerned and, well, yes, frightened, but also filled with the purest wonder and a gnawing curiosity about what's going to happen just ten years from now to Hal and me and to a number of our contemporaries who are close friends—to Margaret and Daffy (our wives), to Mack, Charles, and Howard, to Helen, Gertrude and Charlotte, to Betty and Elizabeth—and to the whole world too. Will there be (after ten years) a flood of tangible miracles and revelations from outer space, including the discovery of an ancient civilization compared to which Egypt and Chaldea are the merest whims or aberrations of infant intelligence, or a torrent of eldritch terrors from the black volumes between the glittering stars, or only dusty death?—especially for me and those dearly valued comrade-contemporaries of mine.

Ten years, what are they? Nothing

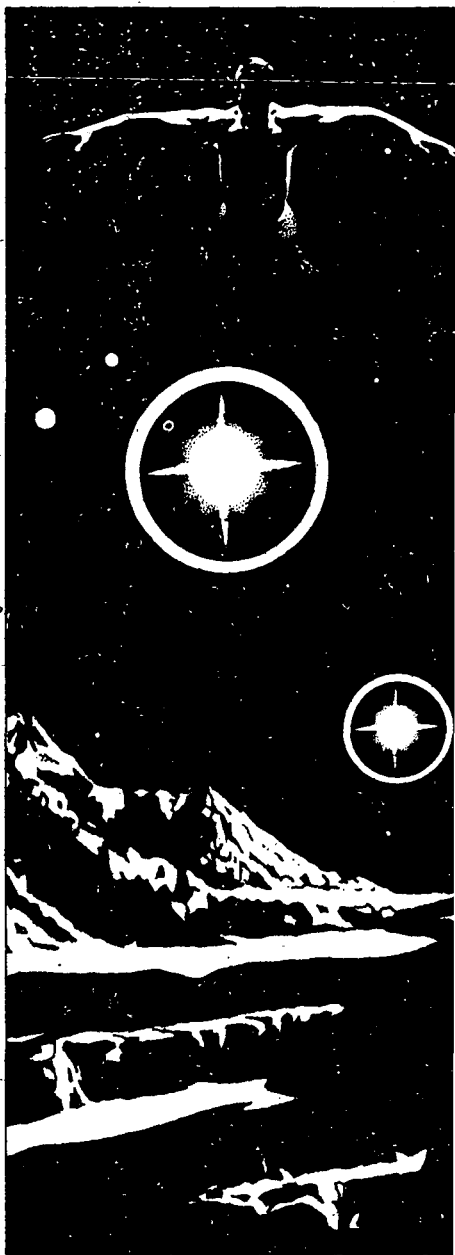
to the universe—the merest millifraction of an eye blink, or microfraction of a yawn—or even to a young person with all his life ahead. But when they are your last ten years, or at the very best your next to last . . .

I'm also in particular concerned about what's happened to Francois Broussard (we're out of touch with him again) and to his ravishing and wise young wife and to their brilliant 15-year-old son (he would be now) and about what part that son may play in the events due ten years from this year of 1976, especially if he goes on to become a spaceman, as his father envisioned for him. For Francois Broussard is at or near the center of the riddle we think (and also fear, I must confess) we solved last night up to a point, Hal and I. In fact, he almost is the riddle. Let me explain.

I was born late in 1910 (a few months after Hal and before Broussard—all of us, I and my dear contemporaries, were born within a year or two of each other) too young to have been threatened in any way by World War I, yet old enough to have readily escaped the perils of military service in World War II (by

early marriage, a child or two, a more or less essential job). In fact, we were all survivor types like Heinlein harps on (except my kind of survival doesn't involve fighting for my species—zoological paranoid fanaticism!—but for me and mine . . . and who *those* are, *I* decide) and I early began to develop the conviction that there was something special about us that made us an elite, a chosen mini-people, and that set us apart from the great mass of humanity (the canaille, Broussard had us calling those, way way back) beginning its great adventure with democracy and all democracy's wonders and Pandora ills: mass production, social security, the welfare state, antibiotics and overpopulation, atomics and pollution, electronic computers and the strangling serpents of beaurocracy's red and white tape (monstrous barber pole), the breaking loose from this single planet Earth along with that other victory over the starry sky—smog. Oh, we've come a long way in sixty years or so.

But I was going to tell you about Broussard. He was our leader, but also our problem child; the mouth-piece of our ideals and secret dreams of glory, but also our mocker, severest critic, and gadfly, the devil's advocate; the one who kept dropping out of sight from time to time for years and years (we never did, we kept in touch, the rest of us) and then making a triumphant return when least expected; the socially mobile one too, mysteriously hobnobbing with notorious public figures and adventuresses, with people in the news, but also with riff-raff, revolutionaries, rapsclions generally, criminals even, and low-life peasant types (we stuck mostly with our own class, we were cautious—except when he seduced us out of that); the world traveler and



cosmopolite (we stayed close to the U.S.A., pretty much).

In fact, if there was one thing that stood out about Francois Broussard, first and foremost, it was that aura of the foreign and the mysterious, that air of coming from some bourne a lot farther off than Mexico or Tangier or Burma or Bangkok (places he made triumphant returns from and told us excitingly bizarre stories about, stories that glittered with wealth and high living and dissoluteness and danger; he was always most romantically attractive to our ladies then, and he's had affairs with several of them over the years, I'm fairly sure, and maybe one with Hal, it's just possible).

We never have known about his background at first hand, in the same way we do about each other's. His story, which he has never varied, is that he was a foundling brought up by an accident and eccentric Manhattan millionaire (the romantic touch again) Pierre Broussard but also called "French Pete" and "Silver Pete," who made his pile mining in Colorado, a lifelong secret crony of Mark Twain, and educated (Francois was) by tutors and in Paris (he's named his son by his young wife Pierre, the boy he told us would become a spaceman).

In physical appearance he's a little under middle height but taller than Hal and slenderer (I'm a giant) rather dark complected with very dark brown hair, though silvered when we last saw him in 1970 six years ago. He's very quick and graceful in his movements, very fluid, even in later years. He's danced in ballet and he's never motion sick. In fact, he moves like a cat, always landing on his feet, though he once told me that gravity fields seemed unnatural to him, a distorting influence on the dance of life—he was the first person I knew to

dive with aqualung, to go the Cousteau route into the silent world.

His style of dress has always accentuated his foreign air—he was also the first man I knew to wear (at different times) a cape, a beret, an ascot, and a Vandyke beard (and wear his hair long) all back in the days when it took a certain courage to do those things.

And he's always been into the occult of one sort or another, but with this difference: that he always mixes real science in with it, biofeedback with the witchcraft, Jung with the flying saucers, verified magnetism with Colonel Estobani's healing hands. For instance, when he casts a horoscope for one of his wealthy clients (we've never been his clients, any of us; for the most, we're something special) he uses the actual positions of the sun and moon and planets in the constellations rather than in the "signs"—the constellations as they were two thousand years ago and more. He's been an avid field astronomer all his life, with a real feeling for the position of the stars and all the wandering bodies at any instant. In fact, he's the only person I've ever known to look at the ground and give me the feeling that he was observing the stars that shine above the antipodes—look at his knees and see the Southern Cross.

(I know I seem to be going on forever about Broussard, but really you have to know a great deal about him and about his life before you'll get the point of the explanation Hal and I discovered last night and why it hit us as hard as it did and frightened us.)

After what I've said about horoscopes and the occult, it won't surprise you to hear that our Francois made his living mostly as a fortuneteller. And in view of my remarks about mixing in science, it may not startle

you all that much to learn that he was also apparently a genuine question answerer (I can't think of a less clumsy way to phrase it) especially in the field of mathematics, as if he were the greatest of lightning calculators or as if—this expresses it best—he had access to an advanced electronic computer back in the 1920's and 1930's, when such instruments were only dreams—and the memory of the failure of Cavendish's differential engine, which tried to do it all mechanically. At any rate, he had engineers and statisticians and stockbrokers among his clients, and one astronomer, for whom he calculated the orbit of an asteroid—Mack verified that story.

A queer thing about Broussard's question answering (or precision fortunetelling)—it always took him a certain minimum time to get his answers and that time varied somewhat over the years: ten hours around 1930, twelve hours around 1950, but only ten hours again in 1970. He'd tell his clients to come back in so many hours. It was very strange. (But we just mostly heard about all that. We never were his clients, as I've said, or members of his little mystic groups either—though we occasionally profited from his talent.)

A few more strange things I must tell you about Broussard while they're fresh in my memory, mostly unusual notions he had and odd things he said one time or another—a few more strange things and one vision or dream he had when he was young and that seemed to signify a lot to him.

Like Bernard Shaw and Heinlein (recalling both *Back to Methuselah* and *Children of Methuselah*) Francois Broussard has always been hipped on the idea of immortality or at least very long life. "Why do we all have to

die at seventy five or so?" he'd ask. "Maybe it's just mass suggestion on an undreamed-of scale. Why can't we live to be three hundred, at least?—and maybe there are some among us (a long-life genetic strain) who do so, secretly."

And once he said to me, "Look here, Fred, do you suppose that if a person lived well over a hundred years, he or she might metamorphose into some entirely different and vastly superior sort of being, like a caterpillar into a butterfly? Aldous Huxley suggested something of that sort in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, though there the second being wasn't superior. Maybe we're all supposed to do that, but just don't live long enough for the transformation to happen. Something we lost when we lost our empire or empyry—not, I'm just being poetic."

Another pet idea of his was of people living in and coming from space—and remember, this was way before earth satellites or planetary probes . . . or flying saucers and von Daniken either. "Why can't people live in space?" he'd demand. "They wouldn't have to take along all that much of their environment. There'd be perpetual sunlight, for one thing, and freedom from the killing strain of gravity that cuts our lives short. I tell you, Fred, maybe this planet was settled from somewhere else, just like America was. Maybe we're a lost and retrogressed fragment of some great astral empire."

Speaking of the astral reminds me that there was one particular *part* of the heavens that Francois Broussard was especially interested in and somehow associated with himself—particularly in the late 1940's and early 1950's, when he was living in Arizona with its clear, starry nights

that showed the Milky Way; he had some sort of occult coterie there, we learned; he'd stare and stare at it (the spot in the heavens) with and without a telescope or binoculars through the long desert nights, like a sailor on a desert island watching for a ship along a sea lane it might follow. In fact, he once spotted a new comet there, a very faint one. Not very surprising in an astrologer, what with their signs, or constellations of the zodiac, but this spot was halfway around the heavens from his natal sign, which was Pisces, or Aquarius rather by his way of figuring it. He was born February 19, 1911, though exactly how he knew the date so certainly, being a founding, we've never learned—or at least I never have.

The spot in the heavens that fascinated or obsessed him so (*his* spot, you might say) was in Hydra, a long and straggling, quite dim constellation. Its serpent-head, which lies south of zodiacal Leo, is a neat group of faint stars resembling a bishop's miter flattened down. Hydra's only bright star, located still farther south and where the serpent's heart would be, if serpents have a heart, is Alphard, often called the Lonely One, because it's the only prominent star in quite a large area. I can remember thinking how suitable that was for Francois—"the Lonely One," theatrical and Byronic.

One other thing he had odd angles on, mixing the supernatural with the scientific, or at any rate the pseudo-scientific, was ghosts. He thought they might be faintly material in some way, a dying person's last extruded ectoplasm, perhaps, or else something very ancient people transformed into, the last stage of existence, like with Heinlein's Martians. And he wondered about the ghosts of inanimate

objects—or at least objects most people would think of as inanimate.

I recall him asking me around 1950, "Fred, what do you think the ghost of a computer would be like?—one of the big electric brains, so called?" (I remembered that later on when I read about Mike or Mycroft in Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*.)

But I must tell you about Francois' vision, or dream, the one that seemed to mean so much to him—almost as much as his spot in Hydra near Alphard. He's the sort of person who tells his dreams, at least his fancy cosmic or Jungian ones, and gets other people to tell theirs.

It began, he said, with him flying or rather swimming around in black and empty space—in free fall, a person might say today, but he had his dream and described it back about 1930.

He was really lost in the void, he said, exiled from earth, because the black space in which he swam was speckled with stars in every direction, whichever way he looked as he twisted and turned (he could see the full circle of the Milky Way and also the full circle of the zodiac) except there was one star far brighter than all the others, almost painfully glaring, although it was still just a point of light, like Venus to the naked eye among the planets.

And then he gradually became aware that he was not alone in the void, that swimming around with him, but rotating and revolving around him very ponderously, moving very slowly, were five huge, black, angular shapes silhouetted against the starfields. He could actually see their sides only when they happened to reflect the light of the glaring Venus-like star. Those sides were always flat, never rounded, and seemed to be

made of some silvery metal that had been dulled by ages of exposure so that it looked like lead.

The flat sides were always triangles or squares or pentagons, so that he finally realized in his dream that the five shapes were the five regular, or Platonic solids, perhaps discovered by Pythagoras: the tetrahedron, the hexahedron (or cube), the octahedron, dodecahedron (twelve-sided), and icosahedron (twenty-sided). A total of fifty sides for all five bodies.

"And somehow that seemed highly significant and very frightening," Francois would say, "as though in the depths of space I'd been presented with the secret of the universe, if only I knew how to interpret it. Even Kepler thought that about the five regular solids; you know, and tried to work it out in his *Mysterium Cosmographicum*."

"But oh God, those polyhedrons were *old*," he would go on. "As if very finely pitted by eons of meteoric dust impacting and weathered by an eternity of exposure to every variety of radiation in the electromagnetic spectrum."

"And I somehow got the feeling," he would continue, fixing you with those wild eyes of his, "that there were *things* inside those huge shapes that were older still. Things, beings, ancient objects, maybe beings frozen or mummified—I don't know—maybe material ghosts. And then it burst upon me that I was in the midst of a vast floating *cemetery*, the loneliest in the universe, adrift in space. Imagine the pyramids of Cheops, King's and Queen's Chamber and all, weightless and lost between the stars. Well, they do make lead coffins and if the living can live in space, so can the dead—and why mightn't a very advanced civilization, an astral empire, put

their tombs in space?" (Harking back to his dream in the 1950's he made that "into orbit," and we all remembered his dream when at that time some nut mortician suggested orbiting globular silver urns as repositories for human ashes.)

Sometimes at that point Francois would quote those lines of Calpurnia to Caesar in Shakespeare's play: "When beggars die, there are no comets seen; The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes." (Shakespeare was a very comet-conscious man; they had a flood of bright ones in his time.)

"And then it seemed to me," he would continue, "that all those ghosts were flooding invisibly out of those five floating mausoleums and all converging on me suffocatingly, choking me with their dust. . . and I woke up."

In 1970 he added a new thought to his vision and to his odd notions about ghosts too, his eyes still wild and bright, though wrinkle-netted: "You know how they call the neutrino the ghost particle? Well, there are some even ghostlier and still more abstract properties of existence being discovered today, or at least hypothesized, by people like Glashow, properties so weird and insubstantial that they have names, believe it or not, like strangeness and charm. Maybe ghosts are beings that have no mass or energy at all, only strangeness and charm—and maybe spin." And the bright eyes twinkled.

But now in my story of Francois Broussard (and all of us) I have to go back to about 1930, when the neutrino hadn't been dreamed of and they were, in fact, just discovering the neutron and learning how to explain isotopes. We were all students at the University of Chicago—that's how we

got together in the first place. Francois was living with (sponging off?) some wealthy people there in Hyde Park who helped support the Oriental Institute and the Civic Opera and he was auditing a couple of courses we were taking—that's how we got to know him. He was wearing the cape and Vandyke then—of fine, dark brown hair, almost black, that was silky with youth.

He'd come straight from Paris on the *Bremen* in a record four-day crossing with the latest news of the Left Bank and Harry's American Bar and Gide and Gertrude Stein. His foster father, old Pierre Broussard, the crony of Mark Twain, had been dead some few years (expiring at ninety in bed—with his newest mistress) and Francois had been done out of his inheritance by conniving relatives, but that hadn't taken the gloss off the grotesque incidents and scrapes of his childhood, which made old Silver Pete sound like a crazy wizard and Francois the most comically precocious of apprentices.

What with all his art interests he seemed something of a dilettante at first, in spite of also auditing a math course in the theory of sets (then groups, *very* advanced stuff at that time) but then we got the first demonstration of his question answering. Howard was getting his master's degree in psych, except that he'd gotten conned into doing a thesis that involved doing two semester's paper work at least correlating the results of one of his thesis-professor's experiments—simple enough math, but mountains of it. Howard put off this monstrous chore until there was not a prayer of his finishing it in time. Francois learned about it, carried Howard's figures off, and came back with the answers—pages and pages of

them—sixteen hours later. Howard couldn't believe it, but he checked an answer at random and it was right. He rushed the stuff to the thesis typist—and got his master's in due course.

I was there when Francois passed the stuff to Howard, saying, "Three hours to digest the figures, *ten hours to get the answers*, three hours to set them down." (There turned out to be good reason for remembering that ten-hour figure exactly.)

Oh, but he was a charmer, though, Francois was, and in many ways. (Talk about strangeness and charm, *he* had them both, all right.) I think he was having an affair with Gertrude then. His rich Hyde Park friends had set him adrift about that time and hers was the wealthiest family of any of ours, though that may have had nothing to do with it. Yes, a thoroughgoing charmer, but much more than that—a catalyst for imagination and ambition was what he was. There we were, a small bunch of rather bright and fortunate young people, thinking ourselves somehow special and exceptional, but really very naive. Avid for culture on general principles. Just finding out about Marxism and the class war, but not seriously tempted by it. Social security was not yet our concern—the stock market crash of October end, 1929, had barely begun to teach us about social insecurity. Our heroes were mostly writers and scientists—people like T. S. Eliot, Hemingway, James Joyce, Einstein, Freud, Adler, Norman Thomas, Maynard Hutchins at our own university with his Great Books and two-year bachelor's degree, yes, and Lindberg and Amelia Earhart and Greta Garbo. (What a contrast with today's comparable heroes and heroines, who seem to be mostly

anti-establishment and welfare-state types: leftist social workers, drug-involved paramedics, witches and occultists, mystics and back-to-nature gurus, revolutionists, feminists, black power people, gay liberators, draft-card burners—though we did have our pacifists, come to think of it, but they were chiefly non-functional idealists. What a tremendous change all that implies.)

Anyhow, there we were with our dreams and our ideals, our feeling of being somehow different, and so you can imagine how we ate up the stuff that Francois fed us about being some sort of lost or secret aristocrats, almost as if we were members of some submerged superculture—*slans*, you might say, remembering Van Vogt's novel of a few years later; tendrillless slans! (Several of us were into science fiction. I vividly recall seeing the first issue of *Amazing* on a news stand—and grabbing it!—fifty years ago.)

I remember the exact words Francois used once. "Every mythology says that upon occasion the gods come down out of the skies and lie with chosen daughters of men. Their seed drifts down from the heavens. Well, we were all born about the same time, weren't we?"

And then, just about that time, there came what I still tend to think of as scandal and shock. Francois Broussard was in jail in a highway town west of Chicago, charged with a sex offense by a young male hitchhiker. (I've just been mentioning gay liberation, haven't I? Well, what I said about change and contrast between our times and then goes double here.) Hal and Charles went bravely off and managed to bail him out. To my lasting shame I dodged that duty of friendship, though I contributed some of the money. The upshot: almost at

once, before I or any of the others saw him again, Francois jumped bail, simply disappeared, first telling Charles, who was dumbfounded by it, "Sorry to disappoint you, but of course I'm guilty. I simply couldn't resist the creature. I thought, mistakenly, that he was one of us—an imperial page, perhaps." And that grotesque and flippant answer was the end of the whole Chicago episode, leaving us all with very mixed feelings.

But as the months and years passed, we tended to remember the glamorous things about him and forget the other—in fact, I don't think we'd have kept in touch with each other the way we did except for him, although he was the one who kept dropping out of sight. Hal married Margaret, and his editorial work and writing took him to New York City, while mine took me and Daffy, married also, to Los Angeles and the high desert near it, where I got interested in field astronomy myself. The others got their lives squared away one way or another, scattering quite a bit, but keeping in touch through class reunions and common interests, but mostly by correspondence, that dying art.

It was Elizabeth who first ran into Francois again about 1950 in Arizona, where he was living in a rambling ranch house full of Mexican-curios (he'd established dual citizenship) and surrounded by his artsy-occulty, well-to-do coterie. He seemed quite well off himself, she reported, and during the next couple of years we all visited him at least once, usually while driving through east or west (U.S. 40, old 66, gets a lot of travel). I believe Elizabeth and he had something going then—she's the most beautiful, it's the consensus, of all our

ladies (or should I say the feminine comrades in our group?) and has perhaps kept her youth the best (Daffy excepted!) though all of them have tended to stay slimly youthful (conceivably a shared genetic strain?—now I wonder about that more than ever).

The visits weren't all our doing. After he'd been rediscovered, Francois to our surprise began to write notes and sometimes long letters to all of us, and pretty soon the old magic was working again. A lot had happened—the Great Depression, fascism, World War II, Hiroshima, and now the McCarthy era of suspicion, confession, witch-hunt, and fear had started—but we'd survived it all pretty handily. I'd just begun to think of us as the Uncommitted—with the double meaning that none of us seemed to be committed to any great purpose in life, nor yet *been* committed to a mental hospital, like so many others we were beginning to know or hear of, though we had our share of severe neuroses and were getting into our middle-age crises. But with Francois exerting his magnetism once more, we began to seem like aristocrats again, even to me, but not so much secret and lost as banished or exiled, standing a little aloof from life, devoted to a mystery we didn't quite understand, yet hoped the future would make clearer. Someone once said to me, "Fred, you'd *better* live a long life."

I managed to stay with Francois three or four times myself down there in the desert. Twice Daffy was with me—she'd always liked his style, his consciously slightly comical grand manner. Once I was up to all hours stargazing with him—he had a four-inch reflector mounted equatorially. He admitted to me his peculiar inter-

est in the Hydra area, but couldn't explain it except as a persistent compulsion to stare in that direction, especially when his mind wandered, "as if there were something invisible but very important to me lying out there," he added with a chuckle.

He did say, "Maybe that Lonely-One thing gets me about Alphard—a segregated star, a star in prison. Loneliness is a kind of prison, you know, just as real freedom is—you're there with your decisions to make and no one can help you. Slavery is much cosier."

He also had this to say about his point of interest in the heavens, that it hadn't started in Hydra but rather in the obscure constellation of Crater just to the east and south of Virgo—and now showed signs of shifting still farther west toward Canis Minor and the Little Dog Star Procyon and toward Cancer. "The mind is ultimately so whimsical," he said. "Or perhaps I mean enigmatic. Whatever walls of reason you put up, the irrational slips by."

He was still doing his question answering, making his living by it, except that now it took him twelve hours to get the answers. His slim face, clean-shaven now, was somewhat haggard, with vertical wrinkles of concentration between the eyebrows. His hair, which he wore to his shoulders, was still silky, but there were gray threads in it. He looked a little like a Hindu mystic.

And then, just as we were beginning to rely on him in some ways, he pulled up stakes and disappeared again, this time (we pieced together later) to dodge arrest for smuggling marijuana across the border. And he could hardly have run to Mexico this time, because he was wanted by their federal agents too. It appears he was

one of the first to learn that they take equally stern views about such things, perhaps to impress the Colossus of the North.

Another twenty years passed, 1970 rolled or creaked around, and a remarkable number of us found ourselves living in San Francisco—or Frisco as I like to call it to the thin-lipped disapproval of the stuffier of its old inhabitants, but to the joy of its old ghosts, I'm sure, ruffians like Jack London and Sir Francis Drake. Hal and Margaret came from New York City to escape its uncollected garbage and sky blackened by all the east's industrial effluvia, Daffy (it's short for Daffodil) and I from Los Angeles to get out from under its mountainous green smog that mounds up into the stratosphere and spills over the high desert. More than half of the old crowd in all, from here and there across the country, as if summoned by an inaudible trumpet blast, or drawn by some magnetism almost as mysterious as keeps Francois' gaze fastened on the Lonely One.

We were no longer the Uncommitted, I told myself. Too many of us had been committed, or committed ourselves, to mental hospitals over the years—but we'd got out again. (It was beginning to be just a little remarkable that none of us had died.) I liked to think of us now (1970) as dwellers in the Crazy House, that institution in Robert Graves's *Watch the North Wind Rise* to which his new Cretans retired when they abdicated from social responsibility and the respect due age to enjoy such frivolities as pure science and purely recreational sex.

We (and Earth's whole society) were suffering the after-effects of all the earlier good advances—the pollution and overpopulation that went with

nearly unlimited energy, antibiotics, and the democratic ideal. (The only spectacular new advance during the past twenty years had been spaceflight—the beginning of the probing of the planets.) And we were going downhill into the last decade or two of our lives. In that sense we had certainly become the Doomed.

And yet our mood was not so much despair as melancholy—at least I'm sure it was in my case. That's a much misunderstood word, melancholy—it doesn't just mean sadness. It is a temperament or outlook and has its happinesses as well as its griefs—and especially it is associated with *the consciousness of distance*.

Do you know Dürer's wood engraving *Melencolia*? The instruments of work—carpenter's tools—are scattered about her feet, while beside her are a ladder and a strange stone polyhedron and a sphere and also a millstone on which sits a brooding cupid. On the wall behind her are a ship's bell, an hourglass, and a magic square that doesn't quite add up right. She sits there, wings folded, with a pair of compasses in one fist (to measure *distance*), elbow propped on knee and cheek on her other fist, peering with eyes that are both youthfully eager and broodingly thoughtful into the transmarine distance where are a rainbow and a bearded comet—or else the comet's "hair" may only be part of the glory of the setting sun. Just so, it seemed to me, we looked into the future and the sky, into the depths of space and time.

It was another work of high art that in a sense brought Francois Broussard back this time. I was in the great vault of Grace Cathedral atop Nob Hill, where in the clerestory they have the spaceman John Glenn and Einstein's $E=MC^2$ in stained glass.

But I was looking at that one of the six Willett windows which in glorious glooms and glows both illuminates and enshrouds the words "Light after Darkness." The pavement scritch, I turned, and there he stood beside me, smiling quizzically. I realized I was very glad to see him. He hair was grizzled, but cut very short. He looked young and nimble. He was standing on a patch of multicolored sunlight that had spilled through the glass onto the stone floor.

It turned out that he lived hardly a dozen blocks away on Russian Hill, where he had a roof (as I had and Hal too) from which to stargaze when Frisco's fogs permitted. He still made his living answering questions. "Of course, they've got computers now," he said, "but computer time is damned expensive—I charge less." (And it took him only ten hours now to get answers, I learned later—things were getting brisker. While his odd point of interest in the skies was moving from Hydra toward Cancer, just as he'd thought it would.) And he was already in touch with one of us again—Charlotte.

And he was married!—not to Charlotte, but to her daughter, who was also named Charlotte. It gave me the strangest feeling about the tricks of time to hear that, let me tell you. And not only married, but they had a son who was already ten years old—a charming youngster and very bright, he turned out to be, who wanted to be a spaceman, an ambition which his father encouraged. "He'll claim my kingdom for me in the stars," Francois once commented with a cryptic little chuckle "—or else find my grave there."

Somehow these circumstances fired us all again with youthful feelings—young Charlotte and Pierre turned out to be charmers too—and it has

stayed that way with us; only yesterday I was putting together an article on the many very young female film actresses who've surfaced in the past few years, girls even by feminist definition, a sort of nymphette runnel: Linda Blair, Mackenzie Phillips, Melanie Griffith, Tatum O'Neal, Nell Potts, Mairé Rapp, Catherine Harrison, Roberta Wallach. I wonder if this accent on youth, this feeling of some imminent rebirth, has any significance . . . beyond impending second childhood in some of its observers.

At any rate, we all saw a lot of each other the next months—the Broussard trio and the rest of us—and Francois became again our leader and inspirer.

And then, most mysteriously, he disappeared again and his wife and boy with him. We've never got the straight of that except that he was mixed up with people who were vastly anti-Vietnam and (how shall I say?) prematurely all-out anti-Nixon. Even old Charlotte doesn't know (or claims so most convincingly) what's happened to young Charlotte, her daughter, and Francois and their child.

But his influence over us has stayed strong despite his absence. Like the field-astronomy thing that's so symbolic of concern with distance. Last year, in spite of Frisco's fogs, I saw the moon's roseate eclipse in May, the close conjunction of Mars and Jupiter in mid-June, and Nova Cygni 1975 crookedly deforming the Northern Cross at August's end for four nights running before it faded down so rapidly.

And then last night Hal and I were talking about it all, as we have a thousand times—in other words, we were reweaving all I've told you up to now—and then an idea struck me, an idea that gave me gooseflesh, though I didn't at first dream why. Hal had seemingly digressed to tell me about

an astronomy article he'd been reading about plans to rendezvous a space probe with Halley's comet, due to return again in 1986 after its last visits in 1834 and 1910. The idea was to loop the probe around one of the big outer planets in such a way that it would come boomeranging back toward the sun and match trajectories and speeds with the comet as it came shooting in, gathering speed. It was already too late to make use of Saturn, but it could still be worked if you looped the probe around Jupiter, into its gravity well and out again.

"Hal," I heard myself asking him in an odd little voice, "where's the aphelion of Halley's comet?—you know, the point where it's farthest away from the sun. I know it's out about as far as the orbit of Pluto, but *where* in the heavens is it? *Where* would you look in the stars to see Halley's comet when it's farthest from Earth? I know you couldn't actually see it then, even with the biggest telescope. Its frozen head would be far too tiny. But *where* would you look?"

You know, it took us quite a while to find that out and we finally had to do it indirectly, although I have a fair little astronomy library. The *one* specific fact you're looking for is *never* in the books you've got at hand. (We found the aphelion *distance* almost at once—3,283,000,000 miles—but its *vector* eluded us.)

But then in Willy Ley's little 1969 McGraw-Hill book on comets we finally discovered that the perihelion of Halley's comet—its point of closest approach to the sun—was in Aquarius, which would put its aphelion at the opposite end of the zodiac—in Leo.

"But it wouldn't be in Leo, "I said softly. "because Halley's comet has an inclination of almost eighteen degrees

to the Ecliptic—it comes shooting in toward the sun from below (south of) the plane of the planets. Eighteen degrees south of Leo—where would that put us?"

It put us, the star charts quickly revealed, in Hydra and near Alphard, the Lonely One. And that left us silent with shock for quite a space. Hal and I, while my mind automatically worked out that even the slow movement of Francois' point of interest in the sky from south of Virgo to Alphard toward Cancer fitted with the retrograde orbit of Halley's comet. A comet follows such a long, narrow, elliptical path that it's always in one quarter of the sky with respect to earth except for the months when it whips around the sun.

But I'll be forever grateful to Ley's little book that it showed us the way, although it happens to have one whopping error in it: on page 122 it gives the radio distance of Saturn as thirteen and a half hours, when it happens to be an hour and twenty-five or so minutes—likely a decimal point got shifted one place to the right somewhere in the calculations. But the matter of radio distance has a bearing on the next point I brought up uneasily when Hal and I finally started speaking again.

"You know how it used to take Francois twelve hours to get his answers back in 1950?" I said, finding I was trembling a little. "Well, Halley's comet was in aphelion in 1948 and twelve hours is about the time it would take to get a radio answer back from the vicinity of Pluto, or of Pluto's orbit—six hours out, six hours back, at the speed of light. The ten-hour times for his answers in 1930 and 1970 would fit too."

"Or maybe telepathy also travels at the speed of light," Hal said softly. Then he shook his head as if to clear

it. "But that's ridiculous," he said sharply. "Do you realize that we've been assuming that Halley's comet is some sort of spaceship, some sort of living, highly civilized, *computerized* world in space—and that perhaps the memory of it comes slowly back to man each time it reapproaches the sun?"

"Or a space cemetery," I interposed with a nervous little laugh, almost a giggle. "A group of five mausoleums forming the comet's head—although you couldn't observe them telescopically as the comet approached the sun because they'd be concealed by the coma of warmed-up gases and dust. Remember what Francois once said about the ghosts of computers? Why mightn't computers, or the effigies of computers be buried in the tombs of an astral empire?—and God know what else. Just as the Egyptians put effigies of their servants and tools into their tombs, never dreaming that the great bearded meteor ghosting across their sweating, midnight blue Egyptian night every 76 years was another such ossuary.

"And remember Francois' cosmic dream," I continued. "That intensely bright star in it would exactly describe the sun as seen from Pluto's orbit. And out there all the dust and gases would be frozen to the surfaces of the five polyhedrons—they wouldn't make an obscuring coma."

"But you're talking about a *dream*," Hal protested. "Don't you see, Fred, that all that you're saying implies that there actually is some kind of elder cometary civilization and that we all are in some sense children of the comet?"

"The tail of Halley's comet brushed the earth in 1910," I said urgently. "Let's check the exact date."

That fact we found very quickly—it was May 19, 1910.

"—nine months, to a day, before Francois was born." I said shakily. "Hall, do you remember what he used to say about the seed of the gods—or of the princes of the astral empire—drifting down from the stars?"

"Just as Mark Twain (and maybe old French Pete too?) was born in 1834, the year of the previous appearance of Halley's comet, and died in 1910," Hal took up, his imagination becoming as enthralled as my own. "And think of those last two weird books of his—*The Mysterious Stranger*, about a man from elsewhere, and *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*—aboard a comet! Even that posthumous short 'My Platonic Sweetheart' about his lifelong dream-love for a fifteen-year-old girl . . . Fred, there is that suggestion of some weird sort of reincarnation, or mentorship . . ."

I won't set down in detail any more of the wild speculations Hal and I exchanged last night. They're all pretty obvious and maddeningly tantalizing, and wildly baroque, and only time can refute or vindicate them. Oh, I do wish I knew where Francois is, and what his son is doing, and whether a probe will be launched to loop around Jupiter.

I'm left with this: that whether he's conscious of it or not, Francois Broussard (and Hal and I, each one of us, to a lesser degree) has been mysteriously linked all his life to Halley's comet, whether diving around the sun at Venus' distance at 34 miles a second, or moving through the spaceward end of its long, narrow, elliptical orbit no faster than the moon drifts around Earth each month.

But as for all the rest . . . only ten years will tell.

—FRITZ LEIBER

STRANGE WINE

HARLAN ELLISON

Although Harlan Ellison did not make his professional debut in this magazine, he wrote voluminously for its pages early in his career—a time when a steady market for his stories meant a lot to him. The story which follows is “possibly the first upbeat yarn I’ve written in two years.”

TWO WHIPCORD-LEAN California Highway Patrolmen supported Willis Kaw between them, leading him from the cruiser to the blanket-covered shape in the middle of the Pacific Coast Highway. The dark brown smear that began sixty yards west of the covered shape disappeared under the blanket. He heard one of the on-lookers say, “She was thrown all that way, oh it’s awful,” and he didn’t want them to show him his daughter.

But he had to make the identification, and one of the cops held him securely as the other went to one knee and pulled back the blanket. He recognized the jade pendant he had given her for graduation. It was all he recognized.

“That’s Debbie,” he said, and turned his head away.

Why is this happening to me, he thought. I’m not from here; I’m not one of them. This should be happening to a human.

“Did you take your shot?”

He looked up from the newspaper and had to ask her to repeat what she

had said. “I asked you,” Estelle said very softly, with as much kindness as she had left in her, “if you took your insulin.” He smiled briefly, recognizing her concern and her attempt to avoid invading his sorrow, and he said he had taken the shot. His wife nodded and said, “Well, I think I’ll go upstairs to bed. Are you coming?”

“Not right now. In a little, maybe.”

“You’ll fall asleep in front of the set again.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’ll be up in a little while.”

She stood watching him for a moment longer, then turned and climbed the stairs. He listened for the sounds of the upstairs ritual—the toilet flushing, the water moving through the pipes to the sink, the clothes closet door squeaking as it was opened, the bedsprings responding as Estell put herself down for the night. And then he turned on the television set. He turned to channel 30, one of the empty channels, and turned down the volume control so he did not have to hear the sound of coaxial “snow.”

He sat in front of the set for several

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STRANGE WINE

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hours, his right hand flat against the picture tube, hoping the scanning pattern of the electron bombardment would reveal, through palm flesh grown transparent, the shape of alien bones.

In the middle of the week he asked Harvey Rothammer if he could have the day off Thursday so he could drive out to the hospital in Fontana to see his son. Rothammer was not particularly happy about it, but he didn't have the heart to refuse. Kaw had lost his daughter, and the son was still ninety-five per cent incapacitated, lying in a therapy bed with virtually no hope of ever walking again. So he told Willis Kaw to take the day off, but not to forget that April was almost upon them and for a firm of certified public accountants it was rush season. Willis Kaw said he knew that.

The car broke down twenty miles east of San Dimas and he sat behind the wheel, in the bludgeoning heat, staring at the desert and trying to remember what the surface of his home planet looked like.

His son, Gilvan, had gone on a vacation to visit friends in New Jersey the summer before. The friends had installed a free-standing swimming pool in the back yard. Gil had dived in and struck bottom; he had broken his back.

Fortunately, they had pulled him out before he could drown, but he was paralyzed from the waist down. He could move his arms, but not his hands. Willis had gone East, had arranged to have Gil flown back to California, and there he lay in a bed in Fontana.

He could only remember the color of the sky. It was a brilliant green, quite lovely. And things that were not birds, that skimmed instead of flying. More than that he could not re-

member.

The car was towed back to San Dimas, but the garage had to send off to Los Angeles for the necessary parts. He left the car and took a bus back home. He did not get to see Gil that week. The repair bill was two hundred and eighty-six dollars and forty-five cents.

That March the eleven-month drought in Southern California broke. Rain thundered down without end, for a week; not as heavily as it does in Brazil, where the drops are so thick and come so close together that people have been known to suffocate if they walk out in the downpour. But heavily enough that the roof of the house sprang leaks. Willis Kaw and Estelle stayed up one entire night, stuffing towels against the baseboards in the living room; but the leaks from the roof apparently weren't over the outer walls but rather in low spots—somewhere in the middle; the water was running down and trickling through.

The next morning, depressed beyond endurance, Willis Kaw began to cry. Estelle heard him as she was loading the soaking towels into the dryer, and ran into the living room. He was sitting on the wet carpet, the smell of mildew rising in the room, his hands over his face, still holding a wet bath towel. She knelt down beside him and took his head in her hands and kissed his forehead. He did not stop crying for a very long time, and when he did, his eyes burned.

"It only rains in the evening where I come from," he said to her. But she didn't know what he meant.

When she realized, later, she went for a walk, trying to decide if she could help her husband.

He went to the beach. He parked

on the shoulder just off the Old Malibu Road, locked the car, and trotted down the embankment to the beach. He walked along the sand for an hour, picking up bits of milky glass worn smooth by the Pacific, and finally he lay down on the slope of a small, weed-thatched dune, and went to sleep.

He dreamed of his home world and—perhaps because the sun was high and the ocean made eternal sounds—he was able to bring much of it back. The bright green sky, the skimmers swooping and rising overhead, the motes of pale yellow light that flamed and then floated up and were lost to sight. He felt himself in his real body, the movement of many legs working in unison, carrying him across the mist sands, the smell of alien flowers in his mind. He knew he had been born on that world, had been raised there, had grown to maturity and then...

Sent away.

In his human mind, Willis Kaw knew he had been sent away for doing something bad. He knew he had been condemned to this planet, this Earth, for having perhaps committed a crime. But he could not remember what it was. And in the dream he could feel no guilt.

But when he woke, this humanity came back and flooded over him and he felt guilt. And he longed to be back out there, where he belonged, not trapped in this terrible body.

"I didn't want to come to you," Willis Kaw said. "I think it's stupid. And if I come, then I admit there's room for doubt. And I don't doubt, so..."

The psychiatrist smiled and stirred the cup of cocoa. "And so...you came because your wife insisted."

"Yes." He stared at his shoes. They

were brown shoes, he had owned them for three years. They had never fit properly; they pinched and made his big toe on each foot feel as if it were being pressed down by a knife edge, a dull knife edge.

The psychiatrist carefully placed the spoon on a piece of Kleenex, and sipped at his cocoa. "Look, Mr. Kaw, I'm open to suggestion. I don't want you to be here, nor do you *want* to be here, if it isn't going to help you. And," he added quickly, "by *help* you I don't mean convert you to any world-view, any systematized belief, you choose to reject. I'm not entirely convinced, by Freud or Werner Erharh or Scientology or any other rigor, that there is such a thing as 'reality.' Codified reality. A given, an immutable, a constant. As long as what someone believes doesn't get him put in a madhouse or a prison, there's no reason why it should be less acceptable than what we, uh, 'straight folks' call reality. If it makes you happy, believe it. What I'd like to do is listen to what you have to say, perhaps offer a few comments, and then see if *your* reality is compatible with *straight folks'* reality.

"How does that sound to you?"

Willis Kaw tried to smile back. "It sounds fine. I'm a little nervous."

"Well, try not to be. That's easy for me to say and hard for you to do, but I mean you no harm; and I'm really quite interested."

Willis uncrossed his legs and stood up. "Is it all right if I just walk around the office a little. It'll help, I think." The psychiatrist nodded and smiled, and indicated the cocoa. Willis Kaw shook his head. He walked around the psychiatrist's office and finally said, "I don't belong in this body. I've been condemned to life as a human being, and it is killing me."

The psychiatrist asked him to ex-

plain.

Willis Kaw was a small man, with thinning brown hair and bad eyes. He had weak legs and constantly had need of a handkerchief. His face was set in lines of worry and sadness. He told the psychiatrist all this. Then he said, "I believe this planet is a place where bad people are sent to atone for their crimes. I believe that all of us come from other worlds; other planets where we have done something wrong. This Earth is a prison, and we're sent here to live in these awful bodies that decay and smell bad and run down and die. And that's our punishment."

"But why do *you* perceive such a condition, and no one else?" The psychiatrist had set aside the cocoa, and it was growing cold.

"This must be a defective body they've put me in," Willis Kaw said. "Just a little extra pain, knowing I'm an alien, knowing I'm serving a prison sentence for something I did, something I can't remember; but it must have been an awful thing for me to have drawn such a sentence."

"Have you ever read Franz Kafka, Mr. Kaw?"

"No."

"He wrote books about people who were on trial for crimes the nature of which they never learned. People who were guilty of sins they didn't know they had committed."

"Yes. I feel that way. Maybe Kafka felt that way; maybe he had a defective body, too."

"What you're feeling isn't that strange, Mr. Kaw," the psychiatrist said. "We have many people these days who are dissatisfied with their lives, who find out—perhaps too late—that they are transsexual, that they should have been living their days as something else, a man, a woman. . . ."

"No, no! That isn't what I mean. I'm not a candidate for a sex-change. I'm telling you I come from a world with a green sky, with mist sand and light motes that flame and then float up. . . I have many legs, and webs between the digits and they aren't fingers. . . ." He stopped and looked embarrassed.

Then he sat down and spoke very softly. "Doctor, my life is like everyone else's life. I'm sick much of the time, I have bills I cannot pay, my daughter was struck by a car and killed and I cannot bear to think about it. My son was cut off in the prime of his life and he'll be a cripple from now on. My wife and I don't talk much, we don't love each other. . . if we ever did. I'm no better and no worse than anyone else on this planet and *that's* what I'm talking about: the pain, the anguish, the living in terror. Terror of each day. Hopeless. Empty. Is this the best a person can have, this terrible life here as a human being? I tell you there are better places, other worlds where the torture of being a human being doesn't exist!"

It was growing dark in the psychiatrist's office. Willis Kaw's wife had made the appointment for him at the last moment and the doctor had taken the little man with the thinning brown hair as a fill-in, at the end of the day.

"Mr. Kaw," the psychiatrist said, "I've listened to all you've said, and I want you to know that I'm very much in sympathy with your fears." Willis Kaw felt relieved. He felt at last someone might be able to help him. If not to relieve him of this terrible knowledge and its weight, at least to tell him he wasn't alone. "And frankly, Mr. Kaw," the psychiatrist said, "I think you're a man with a very serious problem. You're a sick man and you need intense psychiatric

help. I'll talk to your wife if you like, but if you take my advice, you'll have yourself placed in a proper institution before this condition. . . ."

Willis Kaw closed his eyes.

He pulled down the garage door tightly and stuffed the cracks with rags. He could not find a hose long enough to feed back into the car from the tail pipe, so he merely opened the car windows and started the engine, and let it run. He sat in the back seat and tried to read Dickens's "Dombey and Son," a book Gil had once told him he would enjoy.

But he couldn't keep his attention on the story, on the elegant language, and after a while he let his head fall back, and he tried to sleep, to dream of the other world that had been stolen from him, the world he knew he would never again see. Finally, sleep took him, and he died.

The funeral service was held at Forest Lawn, and very few people came. It was a weekday. Estelle cried, and Harvey Rothammer held her and told her it was okay. But he was checking his wristwatch over her shoulder, because April was almost upon him.

And Willis Kaw was put down in the warm ground, and the dirt of an alien planet was dumped in on him by a Chicano with three children who was forced to moonlight as a dishwasher in a bar and grill because he simply couldn't meet the payments on his six piece living room suite if he didn't.

The many-legged Consul greeted Willis Kaw when he returned. He turned over and looked up at the Consul and saw the bright green sky above. "Welcome back, Plydo," the Consul said.

He looked very sad.

Plydo, who had been Willis Kaw on a faraway world, got to his feet and looked around. Home.

But he could not keep silent and enjoy the moment. He had to know. "Consul, please. . . tell me. . . what did I do that was so terrible?"

"Terrible!" The Consul seemed stunned. "We owe you nothing but honor, your grace. Your name is valued above all others." There was deep reverence in his words.

"Then why was I condemned to live in anguish on that other world? Why was I sent away to exist in torment?"

The Consul shook his hairy head, and his mane billowed in the warm breeze. "No, your grace, no! Anguish is what *we* suffer. Torment is all *we* know. Only a few, only a very few honored and loved among all the races of the universe can go to that world. Life there is sweet compared to what passes for life everywhere else. You are still disoriented. It will all come back to you. You will remember. And you will understand."

And Plydo, who had been, in a better part of his almost eternal life of pain, Willis Kaw, *did* remember. As time passed, he recalled all the eternities of sadness that had been born in him, and he knew that they had given him the only gift of joy permitted to the races of beings who lived in the far galaxies. The gift of a few precious years on a world where anguish was so much less than that known everywhere else.

He remembered the rain, and the sleep, and the feel of beach sand beneath his feet, and ocean rolling in to whisper its eternal song, and on just such nights as those he had despised on Earth, he slept and dreamed good dreams.

Of life as Willis Kaw, life on the pleasure planet. —HARLAN ELLISON

Jack Dann has proven himself one of the most important of the new young authors in our field. His surreal novella, "Junction" (FANTASTIC, November, 1973) was a runner-up for the SFWA Nebula Award. Now he has written a pair of novellas ostensibly about a young man's journey to the stars: "Starhiker" and "The Dream Lions." The latter will appear here next issue. Of them he says, "This is a work which incorporates old and new techniques; that bridges the gap between 'old and new wave'—that is mystical and also extrapolative." He adds, "I've tried to come to terms with the heavy influence of the graphic arts on my work. If the reader is observant, he will see John Martin's Fallen Angels Entering Pandemonium, Josef Albers' experimental drawings, and L'Oeil du Silence by Max Ernst. Their paintings set certain scenes of the story; and from their artistic soil new word paintings have been created."

STARHIKER

JACK DANN

Illustrated by STEPHEN E. FABIAN

Who owns the earth? Did we want the earth that we should wander on it? Did we need the earth that we were never still upon it? Whoever needs the earth shall have the earth: he shall be still upon it, he shall rest within a little place, he shall dwell in one small room forever.

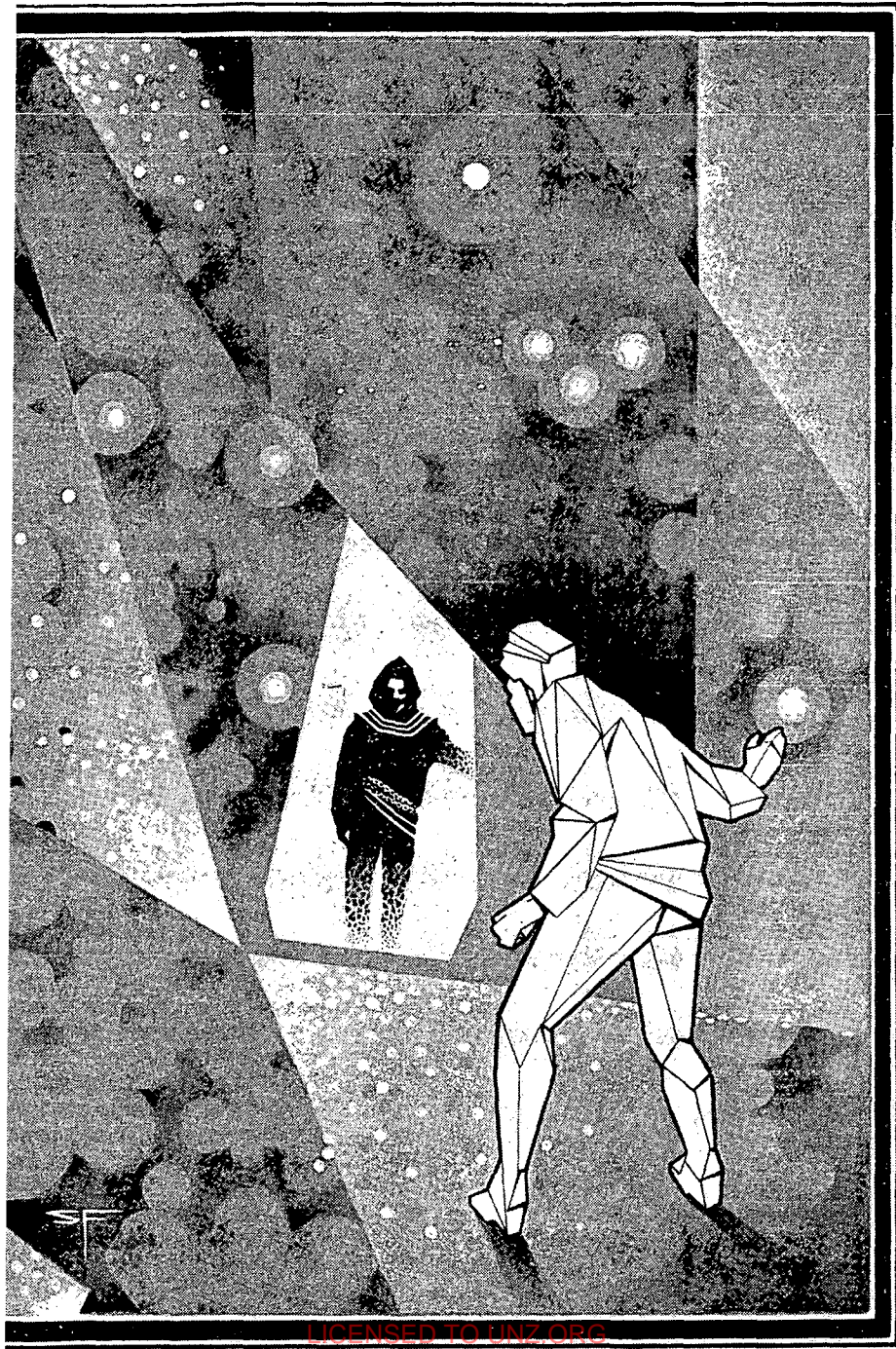
—Thomas Wolfe

4.
AS BO FORESTER gazed at the silvery starships passing into the moon, he dreamed that he would find his own way to the stars. He stared through the scratched glass of the rebel-made telescope until his eyes watered.

He followed a shuttle making its

way toward earth. The ship would land in London Bogs to pick up its cargo. Bo had not yet seen the port and excavation in the Bogs, but he assumed it would look like all the others—a mile wide wound in earth's body, piercing its thin crust and silicate mantle to milk the mine of molten elements in its core, a few delicate skyscrapers to house the aliens, a grey dismal circle where nothing lived, a commerce-ground where earth showed her displeasure and grief by turning barren. Like crystal gardens, the Hrau buildings would add a still beauty to the dead landscape which hid the monstrous cargo ships in the tunnel-gutted earth.

Seen through Bo's telescope, the



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fat, bulky, quarter-mile long shuttle was a small bright star moving through the sky.

Bo shifted his telescope so he could look at the moon. It was like an old friend, a bright unchanging face in the heavens, a place he would give his heart to visit, for there was nothing for humans on earth but themselves. Everyone looked backward to classical times of starships and colonies and dominance. The future could only be tolerated. It would be the same as the present, and the present was only a grim reminder that humanity had not only lost its small, backwater empire, but it had also lost Earth.

It was a full moon. Without aid of lenses the man-in-the-moon would still appear for children and smile beneficently upon Earth. But with the telescope Bo could really see the moon, see it freed of legend and gossip and exaggeration. He could see what man had once been able to accomplish—the great mirror in Mare Serenitas and the tunnel Linne in its center, a black spot in the mirror, an opening into the rumoured cities inside the moon, the loading and shipping places. From there, he thought, the ships would leave for other systems and possibly carry beings stranger than anything he could imagine.

He spat on the ground. Why did he think of such things? he had asked himself over and over. He was a drifter, a hobo, a nothing like everyone else. He was assured comfort. He had only to accept it. But the only thing he would beg the grey-faced Hrau for was work in the freighters or on the moon. Politely, with thin grins and fluttering nasal membranes, the Hrau would tell him to take food and games or work with other folk.

In several hours the cargo ship would arrive in the Bogs several miles away. Bo would probably be drunk in Aldo's tavern, trying to act dumb and coarse to get along. It was the way. Even his friends, who could hold pithy conversation in the woods and at private parties, muelled and duhed and made nonsense talk. It was done out of habit, politeness, and religious devotion.

"So there you are," said Petrofi. "We thought you'd be hanging about and watching the stars." Petrofi was thin and muscular, with the exception of a great beer-belly which hung over his rope belt. He was a smithy and had a shock of black hair and a prominent chin. With him were several young people and Lynn, a pubgirl who had been a drifter. She wasn't much to look at, Bo thought, but there was something there, a certain flair and exuberant curiosity. Her face was flushed and long blond hair clung to her cheeks and covered her overshirt.

Bo knew that she was still attracted to him, but she was Petrofi's girl; and, anyway, most women were fond of Bo because he was a hobo, a tattler—it was drifters like him that spread the gossip, made up new songs, created new variations on folk myths and tutored interested children. A hobo was a combination scribe, lawyer, judge, bum, prophet, clergy-man, and romantic lover. Most of them couldn't live up to their charismatic image, but even the old boes got along and managed not to be tarred and feathered too often.

When Bo wasn't around, Petrofi was the tacit leader of the scraggly youths crowding around Bo and his telescope. They all either worked or made a point of spending the entire day in the pub where they could

civilly drink and discuss humanity's plight and the old days and the coarseness of the Hrau. It was always the bohemian fringe, the young and disgruntled, that supported boes after the folk had heard their stories and the novelty of the traveler was replaced with more important preoccupations. When Bo's only listeners were loafers and youth, he knew it was time to pack up and leave. It was the same everywhere. After a few weeks, sometimes months, the folk would become increasingly wary. New ideas meant change and there had been enough of that in Old Times. But Bo was used to it—he could always move on, start another love-hate relationship with a similar town, hear similar jokes, meet similar people.

Nothing much happened in sleepy towns and hamlets. So Bo made up the news, made life out to be exciting and interesting and dangerous. The rebels were always raiding, a whole scatfull of Hrau had been killed, it was rumoured that someone had learned to use their smooth devices. He could always make up talk of life in the cities, but the cities were only slightly larger than towns and almost as quiet. But Bo made up stories of wicked harolds and hussies who lived ostentatiously in sin houses of murder and deceit—he made them up as he went, changing old ideas to fit new taverns. All the boes told variations of the same stories, but every once in a while, when he was drunk or stoned or just didn't care, Bo would make up new legends, legends that stayed in the towns, that grew and took on a reality. Those were the times he would be tarred and feathered and left outside of town.

"It wouldn't be a good idea to go to Aldo's tonight," Lynn said, pressing

the wrinkles out of her overshirt with the palm of her hand.

"Sam Groundcart says he saw rebels near Poco Ridge," said Petrofi, putting his arm over Lynn's shoulder. "That's only a few miles from here. He says he spied their camp at night—last and there were a lot of them, about forty."

"That's a lie," said Lynn. "The rebels are west, near Strongspot."

"Not good enough," Bo said.

"How about this?" asked Fish, a slender boy who was prematurely bald and sported thin, gauzy whiskers on his pimpled chin. "There have been rumours about those Hrausticks that open the ground with a touch . . ."

"Well?" asked Bo.

"Well, Sadie's got one and knows how to use it. She's dropping all the mountains into a hole so she can see what's on the other side."

"Yes, yes," said Lynn, "that's true. I saw her at the tavern. She's going to bury Aldo and his sinners with her stick unless she can reform them."

"Not good enough," Bo said with a sigh. It always came to this, he thought: stupid games with hopeful boes and marriageable talkstoppers. He listened to the crickets. It seemed that whenever he had to move on, the crickets would be unbearably loud, as if they were mocking him, chittering and chasing him to a quieter place.

"But it's true that Hrau have closed up Longview in a huge dome," Lynn said. "It's transparent as blown glass and high as the Cricket Hills."

"She's right," said Fish. "The hills are due west, less than a day's walk."

"Not good enough. I'm leaving," Bo said, watching the grass rippling slightly in the wind. The moon turned the wind's tails into shimmering, dis-

appearing roadways.

"Where are you going?" asked Lynn

"I don't know," he said and walked toward the stone trail, a littered cartway which would lead him to a Hraustop.

They followed him and asked questions and made jokes and stories and acted as if they were all going to accompany him to exciting places on the other side of the earth. But Bo was thinking about Lynn and his telescope. He would hide the telescope somewhere along the way where it would be safe until he returned. Bo was tired of carrying it from town to town. Possessions tie you down, he thought. Lynn would, no doubt, stay with Petrofi, who would soon become fat as a river rat. They would make babies and he would sneak into the Hraustop every week for food with the other folk. Petrofi's gang would soon melt into the town and it would look like anyplace to the next boe that came upon it. But right now, this second, Bo didn't want to leave—Roundabout was special. It was a place to come back to, a place to grow old in, a place where he had friends.

But everything dissolved back into reality and Bo realized that Lynn would be in the next town, and there would be a Petrofi, too. Stopping wouldn't make any difference. He would be trapped with folk. The smart ones were hidden, or maybe, Bo thought, there weren't any smart ones. Only Hrau. And even Hrau would not talk to him about anything other than food and games and directions.

Every time he left a town he lost that feeling everyone else seemed to take for granted, a familiarity that was relearned with every word or handshake or coupling. He left the others

behind. He walked on and thought about them. They were already relegated to short-term memory.

It was a warm night, not humid but richly fresh. High grass was all around him and the sky was clear and filled with bright stars and nebulous white dust. Bo could hear the chuckle of Erie River and the crickets' songs were unusually loud and sharp. This was a nice valley, he thought. He felt settled and comfortable. It was time to move on. Perhaps he could shuttle under the Ocean to Americas if the Hrau still permitted humans to play on the shuttletrains. They were automatic anyway, and the Hrau used their instanboxes to get around the world.

But every place that folk lived was just like every place else. The scenery in some parts was more beautiful than in others, but people were people—they did not even dress much differently or speak different languages. Only the accents and hand movements varied. And it was hand movement and inflection that divided the classes, but classes were a silly affectation, Bo thought. Everyone could have as much as he wanted—yet to take more than farmer's fare would be enough to get you tarred and whipped.

There's no place to go, Bo thought, gazing at the moonlit hills and shadowy terrain ahead. What next? In Sutton Lynn will have black hair instead of blond and she'll stutter and the Old professor will twiddle and twaddle and won't know anyone smarter than a toad or a rock with a human face.

Only the Hrau, he thought.

Bo was a slight shadow on the stone path. Safe, secure Roundabout was several hills behind him. As he

walked along the rocky path overgrown with grass and weed and crawlers, he forgot his songs and all the faces in the sad, sleepy town he had left. The familiar coldness of being alone in the stretches between towns and people wearied him. He had no future, only a continuous present of made-up words and deeds and rooms over stables and stores and faceless girls and friendless friends.

Before him, in the starry moonlit sky, the shuttle descended upon the bogs. It was a heavy dollar, a round ball stretched a bit at each end—made for freight, not beauty; yet in a way it was beautiful, majestic as a fat king seen from afar. Silently, like a finger burrowing into soft dirt, it descended into the earth. It would berth in its station miles in the ground.

London Bogs, Bo thought, thinking of freighters and starships, rolling the words on his tongue, thinking of a way out of the next town and false song.

There was a Hraustop along the path. It was a brightly colored pinnacle that seemed to corkscrew into the sky, a miniature building made for sunny days, a tiny pinion to prick fluffy clouds.

The slidespace was open and Bo walked in. He was in a large, shadowy room with a pinpoint ceiling far above him—the Hrau built for emotion. There was no need to conserve: Earth was open and full of its own growth and beauty and the power supply was plentiful. So the Hrau built structures that couldn't stand without thread-beams. They built to soothe their own memories and not to express their feelings about Earth. You could find Hraustops everywhere; they were beacons of food, warmth, and alien security. They

were shunned by folk, used only late at night for the few moments it took to receive medical and food supplies (and sometimes a health-cure from a Hraumachine).

Bo sat down before a giftbox and asked for a month's supply of food. He sang a new song about travelling, told of the towns he had visited, and presented his expected itinerary in singsong couplets.

He received thirty food capsules embedded in plastic. They were easy to take and nourishing. They expanded to fill his stomach, gave him a sensation of after-dinner warmth, and left zero-residue—thus eliminating the need to eliminate. A traveller had no need of time wasting chewables. His business was to walk and sing and think up news.

As Bo turned to leave, he glimpsed three youngsters and an older man sneaking out of the Hraustop. Their pride is in their knees, he thought, and began to make up a song. It had been a bad winter. Crops were sparse and most folk had to keep thin to keep up appearances. This year they hated Hrau openly, passionately—they heckled, catcalled, tried to destroy Hraustops, and, in turn, received a few mild shocks and emotion levelers.

Most folk, Bo's neighbors and kin, were prideful, good-natured, healthy, and dumb. The exceptions were rebels who played in the hills and trees, Bo thought. They plot and sit and make love and steal, but what's the good if they can't understand the nature of what they steal? Hrau tools and objects never contained visible moving parts. They were always smooth to the touch and never worked for anyone but Hrau.

Sneak away, Bo thought, as he left the warmth of the Hraustop for a long

walk in the chill night. Wasn't he transfixed by his own stumbling life, reaching for something more without raising his hands, howling and declaiming and cawing for something to do, feeling higher than folk because he was ambulatory and could make up nonsense words and set them to melody?

So tonight I'll sneak into London Bogs and probably die trying, he thought. But it would be worth it. He would find out something, he would reach himself, and maybe even reach the fat king nestled in the earth, the dollar shuttle filling with cargo.

Bo turned off the roadway and made toward the Bogs, which were several miles away. The moon was bright overhead. He listened to the familiar night sounds and watched every shadow. Swamps lay ahead, quagmires of quicksand and luminescent flickers, lowlands filled with snakes and rotting vegetation. But Bo had traveled such spaces before, even in the dark. He moved slowly and let the stinking, sodden place become a part of him. He breathed with the rushes, felt the ground as a farmer feels an old horse in rein. He was hypnotized into his surroundings. That was an old talent, a woodman's talent, and Bo would be safe with the land. He was alert, tuned into every footfall, every smell and sight.

For the moment, he had forgotten his objective. Overland was the port, a rock garden of crystal spires and airy spheres set around the balck mile wide mouth of fused earth, a tunnel reaching a hundred miles into the earth's guts.

He walked for an hour, skirting soft ground where mudflies flickered and decay glowed through thistles and floated on swamp-streams like rotting lilies of the valley. Gradually, the

ground became firmer, dryer, until Bo reached crusted earth. Large rocks lay across a grassy field ahead, unreal and unnatural growths on the even plain.

Bo ducked into the grass and smelled the dusty odor of daytime still sweating from the ground. Hunched over and looking upward through the grass, he could see droplets of dew, frozen for an instant like ice pearls on winter branches. A spiderweb glistened and once again Bo heard crickets—he felt as if his insides were mixed up with the outside. His breath was the sougning of wind and his mind contained every little animal rustling in the brush. Cricketmusic seemed to rustle the grass.

But he was also listening to the static inside his head, the almost words of the Hrau, their telepathic reverberations. When Bo talked with the Hrau, he could hear their words as crackling, swooshing, ululating, and grating noises—but he also heard them inside himself and picked up feedback and echoes of their emotional states. Everyone heard Hrau inside his head, at least to some extent, although it was considered gross and swishy to talk about it. Most folk thought that Hrau were able to read human minds, steal thoughts and, like demons and ghosts, put evil ideas in folk's heads. Everything was blamed on the Hrau, especially disease and death.

Bo knew better. Hrau couldn't read minds; he had tested them and made sure of it. They could feel if a human was about, could 'smell' his presence, but Bo found that emotions could be cloaked. It was a simple trick: he would fall into phase with everything about him, as he had to do when he was in strange territory and dangerous company. He had found that by 'set-

ting in' he could blunt folk's tempers and 'feel' his way in the dark. It wasn't anything much, he always told himself, not anything most people couldn't do if they really tried, but it did come in handy.

Listening to the static, keeping low in the wet grass, and then skirting several hills and hillocks that leveled into brush, he worked his way toward the eastern edge of the port. To his right was a pine forest. He could smell its familiar odors. Its cool, damp presence comforted him.

The noise became clearer in his head. He had homed in on a Hrau conversation. Bo intended to work his way to the port and watch the Hrau closely. If he was to get into the port, he would have to find a way to get past their sensing devices. The Hrau would have some sort of mechanism to prevent folk from gaining entry. But he could not find any evidence of fences, walls, or guards.

The grass gave way to tundra, and he could see two Hrau standing and talking in an open field. Several hundred paces behind them, on higher ground, the illuminated Hrau buildings resembled the white skyline of an ancient city. They were delicate shoots and stars and bubbles atop dead ugly land.

Bo could smell a chemical reek in the air. He felt sick. He was breathing heavily and had an ugly taste in his mouth.

He pushed himself forward, but something intangible was pushing against him. The pressure increased as he drew closer. Something was pommeling him with invisible fists, tearing at his memories, creating nightmares before him. He closed his eyes as smoke monsters gnashed and leaped and roiled inside his head.

He thought the pressure would

crack him open as if he were an egg doll.

Through the screaming and pounding of induced nightmare, he could still hear the Hrau talking. He listened to them, although he understood few of their words. In Belgium and Vennella he had learned about their language. Hrau were not entirely telepathic. Their language was spoken with the lips, but much of the accent and innuendo were accomplished by vibrating their nasal fold. Whole languages were spoken entirely through the nose, the mouth used only for breathing and whistling. Hrau had assimilated all the oldtime human languages and incorporated them into *hrau*. Thus all the glottals and sniffs and singing and Hawaiian ululation.

But the two Hrau standing in the field weren't causing Bo's nightmares. The pressure was coming from something else. An emotion-wall, Bo thought. A dreamfence. It was a tidy trick, he told himself and retreated several paces. Such a wall of nightmare would surely keep out the folk.

To combat the pressure, he imagined he was deep in the woods. He held himself very still, listened to himself, remembered cool nights spent under thatching of twigs. He remembered roasting pigeon over small fires, the strong scent of pine and sizzling animal fat, the roof of black leaves high over his head, the scratching of small animals and the roar of wind pushing past the trees standing like giants in closed file.

The pressure eased. It became a cool breeze to chill Bo's face, but it could not get inside his head because the most private part of his mind was resting in a forest of imagination.

The Hrau gestured to each other with their arms, embraced, and walked toward the port.

Bo followed. He heard other conversations, but tuned them out. He was too quiet to be noticed, too much a part of the ground and bubble buildings and mood of the quiet night. He was like a child walking into the middle of a crowded room with his eyes closed, in hopes that he would not be seen because he could not see. Bo remembered the trick well. It had worked.

Keeping to the shadows and dark outcroppings, he made his way toward the silver dollar buried in the earth, the shuttle destined for the moon. He found his way to the pit easily; the mile wide hole in the earth overpowered the spiderweb city of Hrau.

Although he passed many Hrau, none of them noticed him. Their gibberish was only a rattling in his ears, a whisper in his mind. He ignored them, lest they notice him, but he didn't tune them out. He watched them as they passed. They were slight, self-possessed beings. Bo felt they were silly creatures, only mock-serious and not adult in any human sense. Their grey faces remained expressionless. It was as if grey masks had been pulled over children's faces, so they would never have to reveal the emotions welling beneath.

It was a cruel game, Bo thought, as he tried to suppress his fear of this child's city.

Finally, an open space. A quiet area, dimly lit and well cared for. A smooth floor of fused stone lay before him; it was unbroken except for a few lightshoots and resting places, and a fenestrated wall ahead.

But nothing could hide the mile wide pit before him.

Bo dashed across the open expanse of stone that stretched to the edge of the pit. He looked downward into the

darkness of a hundred mile deep shaft. But it wasn't all darkness: lights and cables and runways and all manner of complex filagree could be seen on the walls. There was a dim glow inside the pit, as if it had its own phosphorescent atmosphere. The walls were perpendicular cities alive with hidden activity. And far below, in the darkness, tractor beams held the ship he sought. The fat king was resting, Bo thought, taking on food and cargo for the trip ahead.

He sidestepped, as if he could distance the mile long circle in tiny steps, as if he could see something more by moving a few feet.

He stepped onto an elevator square and fell.

He was swallowed by the shaft, yet he didn't feel like he was moving.

He found himself on a large busy platform which faced a gleaming expanse of ship. Many tiny portions were laid bare: cables and intricate mesh exposed for Hrau inspection.

Stepping off the square and onto another one, Bo found himself in a large corridor. There was no one about. Feeder tubes were pumping, and in the distance he could hear the *whirr* of robots.

He walked beside the ship, which formed a metal wall that reached upward into darkness. There was a slight crack between ship and port. By looking through it, Bo could see avenues of light spanning the emptiness. He quickened his step; he was searching for an opening in the ship, a crawlspace, a hiding space.

Robots clattered past him. They were small units that hovered several inches from the floor, but the floor ahead was covered with brown ooze. Silently they cleaned the area, sucking the ooze into a fanlike apparatus which expelled a pleasant mist.

The trouble seemed to be a broken drainage line. But there was no time for deliberation. He crawled through the break and followed the line inside the ship. The robots sealed the opening behind him.

It was pitch-dark. Crawling, then walking, he found his way into an empty wastetank. He wiped the slippery ooze from his hands with a red piece of cloth which he wore around his neck for effect.

He stood still as his eyes adjusted to the darkness, then slowly, with long strides, walked onward—in the darkness, direction didn't seem to matter. His only sounds were the padding of his feet, quickened breath, and the drumming of his heart.

After a few minutes, he found a ladder glowing dimly along a wall. This place was probably not often visited, he thought as he climbed. But then, he thought, Hrau might not need strong light to see.

Puffing and swearing, frightened yet excited that he had found a way into the ship, he pulled himself into a large, harshly lit room. The walls were irregular and noisy; they clicked and sighed and even seemed to move. He noticed an avenue of elevator squares—he would stay away from there, he thought.

He walked around investigating, but found he was dizzy and suddenly tired. But he had to pace off the room and find a way out. There had to be slidepanels and latchdoors. Of course, there were always the elevator squares . . .

Bo heard a ringing inside his head and the lights flickered on and off.

He felt a slight tremor, then vague nausea.

A sensation of upward motion.

A deep thrumming.

And he realized that the ship was

beginning its rise to Heaven, to the face in the moon that he had dreamed of touching.

2.
THE SHIP HOWLED steadily. Bo could feel it as a thrumming ache inside his head, a droning song reminding him that he was now part of the ship.

He investigated the room. It was larger than he had expected and the irregular walls hid instrument blocks and panels. But there were no sharp turns, no corners, only alcoves and rounded spaces. Yet Bo had the impression that the space was shaped by straight lines leading to points—invisible corners and nooks created with impossible perspective lines. Bo was reminded of the Hraustops. They looked like glass pinnacles from the outside, but inside were expansive rooms, as if sharp lines and corners could be made out of curved space. Although Hraustops appeared to be frail structures, precariously balanced and always about to shatter with the next gentle puff of wind, no one had ever managed to damage one.

Bo could not find any slidepanels or latchdoors. He stood away from the wall and looked at an avenue of elevator squares across the room. The squares were contiguous with a wall of colored squares which were defined and redefined by constantly shifting lines.

The elevator squares were his only exit. If he knew how to punch out the proper co-ordinates, he could choose a destination. But the ship was at least a quarter of a mile long, Bo thought, and just jumping on the elevator squares was too dangerous. A mistake could mean an easy death, Bo thought, imagining himself as a frozen corpse drifting through space.

But he was safe here. And alone.

He heard a low buzz and watched a Hrau appear on one of the center squares. The Hrau was dressed in a plain brown uniform; he wore no jewelry, not even glitter. The white light flattened his delicate features into a grey mask. He walked briskly to a near-by instrument block where machinery clicked and whirled.

Bo crouched against the wall. He thought quiet thoughts, imagined himself as part of the howling, rushing ship, and tasted bitter saliva. He tried to fall into phase with this strange place and remain unnoticed. But he could not find that quiet place in his mind; he was shaken. He watched the Hrau.

The Hrau was adjusting and examining the shifting images and symbols on a long, eye-level panel. Then he suddenly stopped, turned, and slowly scanned the room. Bo could feel a vague sensation of another emotion touching on his own.

He remained perfectly still; he did not even breathe for fear of letting a little part of himself into the room.

The Hrau returned to his work, but he would pick up Bo's 'scent' again. Bo had lost his calm, had sparked too much emotional energy, and could not draw himself back.

It's just a matter of time before he finds me, Bo thought. But perhaps the Hrau would finish his work quickly and leave without even noticing the still, crouching figure near the wall.

Bo couldn't take that chance. Taking long, awkward steps, he dashed for the elevator squares. He moved quickly and quietly and looked like a scarecrow suddenly brought to life. He hoped he could reach safety before the Hrau turned around again.

He stepped on one of the end-

squares, pressed a glowing red square which, for an instant, was the center of a complex design on the wall, and was whisked away.

He found himself in a crowded room. It was a cold, damp place, filled with whispering shadows and occasional bursts of light which revealed gaunt Hrau faces.

Bo used the elevator squares again.

And found himself in an empty room. Above him were stars; the moon was the size of a melon. He looked up to see a dizzying emptiness defined only by a few curved lines. The moon was a cutout and the stars were glitter dusted along the inside of a black well. Couches and pillows and clear booths were scattered about the room. With the vastness of space above, the Hrau furniture reminded Bo of a spoiled child's toys lying on the floor. There was no need for the Hrau to try to mimic the grace of the view above: the transparent dome was enough.

Bo was calmer now; he breathed with the ship, felt the metal beneath him and the icy infinities above as his own. He watched the moon and wondered if the Hrau had seen him and set off an alarm. They might not find him. The ship was large enough; he might have a chance.

There was no time to wander about idly, Bo thought, feeling afraid and small and vulnerable in the transparent room. He wished for birds and the crunching of twigs and laughter of folk. He was a sodspitter standing inside the stuff of his nightmares. When the crickets scratched and the wind soughed through grass and trees, the ships Bo had watched through his telescope were not made of real stuff—they were dreamthings that everyone accepted; they were nearby stars that marked their own way in

the heavens.

But the floor beneath Bo was real. There could be no returning to safe paths and familiar songs. So he made up new songs which were as frightening to his ears as the bright stars were to his eyes.

Out of curiosity, and fear of the large open room, he examined one of the translucent booths—and then wriggled into it. A clear slidepanel closed behind him and the walls became opaque. The closed space relaxed him, although there was little room for comfort. But for a second, a moment, he felt secure. His body tingled inside the deep couch; he felt weightless. The outside was blanked out. Only a curved board glowed before him; it was a grid of shifting squares.

A voice began to speak inside his head. He could only understand a few words, but he could 'sense' some of the general ideas. He was carried along by the telepathic echoes that gave him the emotional feel of alien concepts.

Alien visions flashed before him.

And then he found himself standing on a grassy hill which overlooked an Earth village. Folk walked the dusty streets and children shouted and played.

Then the scene changed as quickly as a thought, and he was watching a thick-set, middle-aged woman giving birth in a filthy cottage.

Another scene: a forest glade. Cricketsounds, wind, and a young couple making love in the grass . . .

Even as he watched the insects in the grass around the lovers, Bo was aware that he was still on the ship, his real self lolling and moaning in a cramped cubicle. It was as if he had two bodies, two selves which were winding around each other.

By concentrating and fighting off the imposed trance, he found he could move his arm. This is only a Hraumachine, he told himself, as he gained enough courage to press a tiny square on the console. At least he was safe in the dark booth, hidden from the Hrau in a white sleep of programmed dreams.

He was staring into a desert wasteland, a bleached country etched with shadows. Thousands of Hrau stood together and waited. Bo could hear their voices inside his head. Brown insects were crawling over them, augmenting their mental noise. Bo listened to the chittering and singing and moaning of Hrau and ground and insect, but the telepathic 'noise' altered his perceptions. He felt the noise and insects and Hrau. Hrau and insect were being pressed into an organic wall. And the ground, a soft brown tuff, began to roll. When it calmed, there was nothing but a steady sweep of ground, a soothing endless expanse . . .

Bo awoke crying and sobbing, overwhelmed by the beauty and repulsiveness of their song-visions. But perhaps they weren't songs, he thought. He felt the loss of something he could barely imagine.

He experimented with the Hraumachine for seconds or hours—time was subjective, stretched for one vision, thought, emotion, and telescoped for another. Bo stared into the incomprehensible and yearned for more; he wanted the answers, the words, songs, and rhymes so he could express and remember every instant of alien sensation.

The images and experiences flashed before him like blinking lights in a dark room. Some were visually overwhelming, not only for their emotion-values, but simply as grand

vistas and overwhelming scenery—an alien landscape, filagree cities floating through ashen clouds, the smooth land far below, pincushions of pastel minarets giving way to forests reaching a mile into the sky, and deserts shifting, and pink seas. Everything was bathed in the light of three suns. An orange giant and a white companion filled the sky like a huge white comet with a red plume, while a distant yellow star provided its own dim, sad light.

But it was the Hrau that fascinated Bo. He was intrigued with their culture, their sophistication and ritual, their language which was edged with telepathic overtones; he knew them better now, almost understood their emotional bonds and barriers. Somewhere in the icy winds of their emotions were quiet places of love and communion.

Bo was hearing songs he could never sing and words which bubbled with new sound—for those things alone, it was worth being trapped inside the metal stomach of the fat king.

But Bo could not long endure the storm of programmed experiences. He tried to pull away from the machine, tried to find his own stillness which he imagined still lingered in a cool forest on Earth. He tried to find a square which would stop the machine; but he was weak and flooded with alien emotions and sounds and sights. Now he understood why the Hraumachine was a booth, a shut box: the telepathic noise would drown out anyone in the vicinity. The transparent room would become an echo chamber of blaring thoughts.

Bo's hand moved randomly over the board, pressing squares which might deactivate his dreams, searching for the switch which would neu-

tralize the machine. He succeeded, for the small world of space inside the booth gradually became recognizable. But he was enervated, his arms felt weighted, and his mind was still fuzzy, boggled by the machine. Quietly his fears returned as the programmed dreams faded and the stillness of his memory buzzed inside his head like a hummingbird frozen in mid-air.

The booth cleared and the slidepanel opened with a sigh.

The room was filled with Hrau. They moved about quickly, as if engaged in conversation on the run. Some were dressed in familiar uniform, others wore colorful costumes and jewelry—spangles hung from shoulder to waist, gems and mirrors flashed from faces and fingers, robes swished along the floor. The air was full of staccato and susurrations. Almost all the other booths were dark.

Before the Hrau noticed him, Bo activated the Hraumachine again and was dropped into the darkness of alien dreams. He was glugged and numbed; he felt that he could not withstand another emotional assault. But all he could do was wait. In the darkness of the Hrau pleasure-machine he changed. He learned too fast, grabbed at concepts that confused him, tasted new ideas and sensations which ached inside him, incapable of being understood or fulfilled.

Bo was lost in an alien storm. His poems and songs were screams which could not clear the dark walls. If the Hrau were playing outside his booth, he was not aware of them. He was hiding in their recorded memories. He had escaped into the back yard of their cultural experience and his dreams were blinded by new worlds.

WHEN THE BOOTH cleared again, Bo found himself in an empty room. He stumbled out of the booth, thinking only of finding a safe retreat, a hiding place where he could last long enough to glimpse a new star or perhaps visit a far planet. But he was tired. Fatigue stopped his fear and replaced it with easy lethargy.

I don't care, Bo rationalized. Let them catch me. I've had enough.

He was standing in the center of the room. He did not want to chance the elevator squares again; instead, he would look for a slidedoor. Noticing that the room was much darker, he looked through the transparent ceiling but saw no stars.

Where's the moon? he asked himself, and then realized that he was inside it. He stared into the darkness of an expanse which was one hundred miles wide and cut through the heart of the old, pocked moon. Huge starships floated in the darkness. They were smooth silver islands in a moonlit sea—beadlights and markerlines blinked and beckoned like city lights.

Somewhere in the darkness, Bo thought, a ship was waiting for this shuttle. If the songs were correct, the silver hulks were over ten miles long. Like fish eating their own eggs, they would swallow the skipstone shuttles and carry them through the quiet sea of space. The shuttles would travel blind through the lightyears, only to be disgorged at the next planetfall.

But there was no time to stand around. Bo walked toward the nearest wall, which seemed to recede with every step. It was another Hrau illusion. Space and angle were decorative tools—the room was much larger than it appeared; it was designed to provide the security of close spaces for small knots of Hrau or standing battalions.

Before Bo could reach the slidepanel, a Hrau stepped into the room. He was tall and dressed in brown, which indicated that he was in ship's uniform. He wore a cowl which, Bo had learned, was a ceremonial garment. Several silver necklaces hung around his neck and the grey hollows of his angular face were accentuated with decorative coloring.

The Hrau jerked backward upon seeing Bo and uttered unintelligible sounds from his mouth and nose.

As in other times of danger, Bo caught every detail as if time had expanded to turn seconds into phantom minutes. Between breaths Bo had an infinity of time to look over the terrified Hrau. But it was the smallest detail that played in his mind. He watched the nasal membrane twitch and saw the damp, clay colored insides of the Hrau's nose—it was like an obscene mouth. Yet the Hrau still appeared elegant.

The Hrau stood very still and said, "What is your business on this ship?"

Bo felt a wash of the Hrau's emotion, a mixture of fear, curiosity, and revulsion.

"I am a passenger," Bo said, looking for a chance to escape. He watched the alien, waiting to see what he would do. Bo knew he would not be able to talk the Hrau out of the room.

"Do you have indication of passage?"

Bo could feel the Hrau's fear. But why is he afraid of me? Bo thought. He remembered old songs about the grace and inhuman elegance of Hrau execution, but he had never believed them. He thought they were wild exaggerations from an uncertain past, ungainly limericks sung to frighten the folk into giving a lost bo some

wine.

Perhaps they were true . . .

The Hrau was trembling. "You should not be here—"

Bo felt the Hrau's thoughts before the Hrau moved his arm. There was fear, but also courage, as if standing before Bo was the most heroic thing the Hrau had ever done.

The Hrau plucked at the belts of jewelry and baubles around his waist and drew out a silvery Hraustick. But Bo was already pushing through the Hrau's shield of emotion, a tool which was as strong and deadly as the silver stick in his grey hand.

Bo rushed the Hrau and remembered the Hraumachine and the emotion songs and his feelings of empathy for beings just like the one before him. He grabbed the Hrau's wrist and squeezed the weapon out of the Hrau's hand. Bo felt a numbness pass through his arms as the weapon discharged and fell to the floor.

But it was too easy, Bo thought. He had never thought that the Hrau could be so physically weak. That explained the sudden burst of fear.

The Hrau became limp and fell to the floor, sliding out of Bo's grasp like an ink eel. Before Bo could realize that the Hrau's move was intentional, he was thrown backward by a kick to his chest accompanied by a bombardment of frightening, sickening emotion.

The Hrau immediately tried to recover his weapon, which had rolled several feet away from Bo. He intercepted the Hrau and kicked the weapon out of reach.

Bo delivered a quick blow to the Hrau's face—it was sheer force against art. He watched the Hrau redden and fall forward. Catching the Hrau in his arms, Bo felt a sadness and yearning and friendship for the Hrau. The

memories delivered by the Hraumachine were still vivid in his mind. Bo felt the Hrau's sadness and fear like high grass playing across his face, and he visualized the Hrau's memories of love and insects and birth.

He should remain unconscious for a while, Bo thought. He had pulled his punch; the Hrau had only received a light tap. But the Hrau suddenly sifened and his face darkened.

Bo eased the Hrau to the floor. It was the end of a stylized dance, a lover's sharing of sadness and hate. The Hrau died, and for Bo the last few moments kept repeating themselves, but they were now frozen, unchangeable. In that moment Bo felt like someone else. He could not sing his way out of what he had done, could not rationalize; for the first time he felt a sure responsibility for his mistake—it had happened as surely as if Bo had intentionally murdered the Hrau. Intent or mistake would not matter to the Hrau now.

Bo dragged the Hrau across the floor to a clear booth. The Hrau felt much heavier now, as if he had stolen something from Bo which gave him added weight.

He knew I could kill him, Bo thought as he maneuvered the alien into the booth and activated it. But I didn't know, he told himself. Now he understood why the Hrau were rarely seen on Earth and why they were never alone. Their weakness, sensitivity, and telepathic awareness could be overcome by human brashness and savage thoughts. The Hrau were weaklings; only their wills and machines protected them by building walls which simple folk could not push through. When they walked among humankind, they always appeared to be veiled under emotional

masks. Ironically, their strength lay in their weakness.

We must learn from the Hrau, Bo thought. We will have to overcome our own particular weaknesses.

The booth had darkened into a black tear. It cradled the Hrau in the dead stillness of programmed dreams. The Hrau probably would not be found for some time; Bo hoped.

He ran, but the dead Hrau was locked inside him.

The slidepanel closed behind him.

Heels clicking on the smooth, seamless floor, he ran down a translucent corridor. The ceiling was low and the walls slightly rounded. White light radiated from walls, floor, and ceiling; no shadows could be cast on this brightly lit path. Bo did not see anyone, nor could he find any elevator squares or slidepanels.

Go back to the observation room and use the elevator squares, he told himself. But he could not face the ghosts in that room.

He found himself dodging imaginary objects and stopping before non-existent dead-ends. The alien aesthetic provided for mirages and strange tricks of perspective. Bo had learned quite a bit about alien morés in the booth, but he could not accept these decorative illusions—they were decadent frills, he thought. He kept moving forward. Perspective lines closed in on themselves only to reveal more corridor. Bo began to wish for the security of the Hraumachine and remembered the dead Hrau who was asleep in the eye of the storm, adrift in the dead stillness of programmed dreams.

Suddenly the ship was quiet. Bo stopped and listened for the ship's familiar thrumming. Its absence left a peculiar ringing in his ears. And then there was a slight tremor. The shuttle

must be inside a larger ship, he thought. He was inside the belly of a silver chub which had just been swallowed by a shark.

His footfalls echoed in the corridor of the silent ship.

And something sounded inside his head. A low grinding gradually rose to a hum and then settled into a smooth thrumming which was flet as well as heard. The thrumming became louder until it seemed to fill Bo's head with pulse and vibration. For an instant he forgot his fear and remembered Lynn's fortune sticks which had told him of his sure destiny. Every bo has a destiny, he thought, realizing that he was finally on his way to the stars. But something tugged at him. He was still a sodspitter and, even now, he felt the chains of the Earth. Far away as he was, he still felt the breath of folk on his neck. Although he had left the earth, he felt that this was just the beginning of a journey home.

The sticks had indicated he would go far away. But that's a bo's business, Bo thought. He had always mistrusted the sticks and cards.

Bo heard vague telepathic echoes inside his head; nervous shadows populated his mind. Hrau must be nearby, he thought. He would have to find a slidedoor soon, or be caught in the corridor, which was a smooth open trap.

Something cracked beneath Bo's foot. He stopped and picked up a small brown insect, the same kind that he had seen in the booth in a short, but memorable, vision. He kept walking until the floor was covered with the tiny insects.

He could see the end of the corridor; it opened into a large circular room filled with Hrau. The high ceilings reminded Bo of Hraustops on Earth. Several other corridors met in

the room, smooth luminous tunnels which curved out of sight. Elevator squares blinked on and off, creating dim, colored patterns on the walls in the strong white light.

I'll have to go back, Bo thought. He looked behind and saw Hrau moving toward him, their baubles and spangles and mirrors reflecting the cold light of the corridor.

He would have to push forward, try to make his way to the glowing elevator squares. He could hear chittering and heavy breathing—it almost sounded like footfalls in a forest on a windy autumn morning, leaves and branches crunching underfoot while the wind gently soughed through trees. But the air was too close; it reeked with alien odor, probably sweat, Bo thought.

When Bo reached the room, the Hrau were pressed so tightly together that they resembled a single body, a vast knobled form which could only expand, squashing the insects beneath. But the Hrau paid no attention to Bo; they were preoccupied with each other. Shockwaves of alien emotion buried Bo under his own thoughts, which were curiously distant and disconnected. It was as if he were back in the Hraumachine.

What kind of ceremony could this be? Bo thought. It had the fervor of an orgy, as if it were a coming together of wild animals, a coupling celebration. There could be no intellect to this, Bo thought. It was a random act. He remembered a similar vision in the Hraumachine. The insects, Bo remembered, were an alien 'touch'; they would amplify and glue every sensation together.

More Hrau pushed, crawled, climbed into the room. Hrau pushed against Bo, carried him forward, almost smothered him in their reek.

Bo crawled over the bodies as if he were climbing over a steep rocky slope. For long moments he became part of the clicking, sighing, squelching beast. He worked his way across the room to the elevator squares.

A siren shrieked. Bo stepped on a square, and was whisked away from the melee.

He found himself in a narrow walkspace. The siren cut through this place, too. It hurt Bo's ears and made his teeth ache. He stared into a transparent wall. It was as if he was looking into another world: Fishlike beings swam through the dark waters of a huge aquarium, then changed into soft shapes which dissolved, leaving only Bo's reflection on the glassy surface.

What kind of beasts are these? Bo thought. He felt strangely calm, as if he could stare into this glass wall forever. He was overwhelmed by a wash of soothing alien emotion.

The siren sounded again, tearing him from his reverie.

Bo used the elevator squares again. He found himself on another walkway. Slidedoors marked off orderly space. Bright light. He heard footsteps. And he stepped onto the elevator squares. He used them over and over, found every destination, to be a blind alley. The sirens became louder. They would blot out his thoughts. The ship would burn him out.

He stepped off a square and found himself in a musty smelling corridor. He ran to the nearest slidedoor, took a chance, tried to open it—but this one would not open automatically.

Several Hrau stepped off the elevator squares. Bo could smell their rage, confusion, and fear.

They've found the dead Hrau—they're looking for me, he thought.

His hand slid over the metal surface of the door and found a stud which was surrounded by a glowing yellow circle. He pushed the stud and the area inside the circle turned completely yellow. But nothing happened. He pressed again. The door slid open.

He stepped into a narrow chamber, then into a room. The air smelled rank. Bo felt that no one had ever been inside this room. It had the feel of a place peopled by machines. A dead place.

But perhaps, Bo thought, a safe place. A circle beside the open slidedoor glowed yellow. The door remained open. Bo could hear the Hrau in the corridor. He pushed the stud and the circle on the inside of the door turned red. He pushed it again and the door slid shut.

It was dark inside, except for a board which glowed at the opposite end of the room. Above the board was a dimly outlined grid which seemed to stand out from the wall.

The air was bad. Bo felt numbed and sleepy, as if he were drunk on heavy wine. This place even kills the noise, he thought, pacing slowly in the darkness. Were the Hrau outside the room? he asked himself. Perhaps they had mistaken him for one of their own. Perhaps they had left.

He waited. But he had to know that he could get out. Another fear was growing inside him, a mindless fear that he had imprisoned himself.

He tried the door, but could find no glowing square, just dark cold metal.

The door would not open.

3.
THE AIR WAS THICK and hard to breathe. Bo was drawing breath in wheezing gasps. He wondered if he

had fallen asleep; his mouth felt numb, his head ached, and he was dizzy. In the dark room the control board had become a blur of ghostly white light. A yellow square blinked on and off through the haze, suffusing the center of the board with a golden pulsing nimbus. Above the board the grid had turned into smoky cross-hatchings which wavered and then converged when he blinked.

Bo tried to keep the room in focus. It looked two-dimensional, as if the glow of the control board was only a pastel smear on a leaf of black paper. Gasping for air, he pushed through the paper darkness toward the board which always appeared to be within arm's reach.

Determined not to faint, although he had a constant sensation of falling, he pressed the yellow blinking square until it lost color. He had nothing to lose by fumbling with the machinery. If he could not work the door, then wheelworks and engines and buttons and dials might be his only chance.

But the room was suddenly afire with noise and light. Machinery whirled, whined, and clicked. The air began to clear and Bo breathed easily. He sat down on a seat before the control board and looked around. The small room was washed in soft white light; there were no corners or jutting, just smooth sloping walls. It was as if he was shut inside an egg. He imagined that something was growing inside the room, pressing him against the walls and sucking out his breath. Bo had never experienced claustrophobia before, even when he was lost in the water caves—he could still remember water trickling down rough phosphorescent walls which divided dark chambers.

Even with hidden machines laborously pumping and soughing, the

place felt dead. Bo stared down at his hands which were placed palms down on the control board. Light no longer streamed through his fingers. He was looking through a dark window: the board had become translucent.

He looked down upon a planet shrouded with orange-yellow clouds. Behind it, like a bright copper penny, a yellow sun glowed. Bo squinted—the sun's center was a white disk; its yellow halo seemed to be smeared, as if someone had drawn his thumbnail over wet paint. White and red stars burned in the background.

Upon closer inspection, Bo found that the board divided the black sky of space into four quadrants. He had been transfixed by the stars and planet which took up the board before him, but toward the left end of the board which curved upwards, Bo could see a ship moored in the starry darkness, a smooth silver mountain which filled the arbitrary space. Behind the ship a large orange star and its blue-white companion, which was very small in comparison, glowed like lamps in a foggy night. Stars took up the rest of the board.

That's my ship, he thought, realizing that now he was truly alone, that this wasn't another room—it was a Hrau lifeboat or small shuttlecraft, and somehow he had activated it. He watched the ship become smaller, as the planet beneath him loomed larger. It would soon fill the board, he thought, wishing for the safety of home or even a Hraumachine.

But the Hraumachine was stuck in the belly of the receding ship.

He turned away from the board, pressing his palms against his eyes, but he was drawn back. The lights of stars and planet were frozen on the black board before him.

If I can't control this lifeboat, he

thought, I'll crash into the planet. But it might be automatic. Then perhaps the Hrauship won't miss me.

Bo was breathing harder, feeling larger in the confine, as if he would soon outgrow this place. He imagined that Hrau weapons were trained on his ship, this tiny egg which had silently dropped away from the great silver shark. But the shark was still swimming, waiting in the darkness.

The planet filled the center of the board. Orange-yellow clouds gave way to grey, then white clouds. An ocean reflected sunlight like a mirror. Although clouds shrouded the land like roiling fog, Bo could make out a continent shaped like a hand with six fingers and another which looked like a bird with one wing.

He could not find the other ship on the board. Nor could he see stars, just grey clouds.

He watched the world crashing toward him. It had become a disk spackled with copper, gold, umber, sienna, tourmaline and silver, and bossed with mountain and mesa. A green swath turned into forest. Tableland bunched up into hills and valleys and the bright rock feet of mountains. Rivers wound their ways to lower ground like golden sand snakes.

The far ends of the control board showed only clouds and a robin's egg sky.

Bo could see the ship's shadow on hills yellow-green with sunlight. Looking down at the board, he imagined that the land was pushing upward. He braced himself and imagined that his mother's hand was about to slap his face.

The thrumming became louder and Bo knew when the ship touched ground—the ground was like a human palm reaching up to cradle the ship, the tiny shark's egg which had fallen

out of the blue.

The screen was filled with hills, grass, and forest. How many eyes had watched the ship land? Bo asked himself. Even now the ship might be sending out its silent alarm.

A yellow circle was glowing beside the door and Bo felt the silence. His own breathing seemed to echo in the ship, but he no longer felt as if he was shut in a closet. There was bright sun and earth outside, not the hollow blackness of space.

Have to leave, he thought. Only a matter of time before they reach the ship.

Who're they? he asked himself. Hrau? Or others?

Bo ran to the door and pressed the yellow circle. The circle turned red. Another push and the door slid open with a sigh, as if the ship was glad to be rid of him. But the door slid shut behind him, and he was trapped in a small chamber. He heard a hissing sound. Before he could panic, a panel slid open and the chamber was filled with the light, sounds, and smells of the outside.

It looks like Earth, he thought. The ship had landed on high, grassy ground. Below him were lowlands which swelled into hills and plateaus that climbed toward the grey mountains on the eastern horizon. A shadow crept over the far hills like a black beetle over brown leaves—the sun was slipping behind cumulonimbus clouds which reminded Bo of wagons and misshaped horses.

But there was no time for cloud watching. Hrau, and possibly native folk and animals, might be already on the way, he thought. This might even be the Hrau's home planet. He climbed out of the ship and ran toward the forest. Just breathing the air made Bo dizzy. Although his stomach

was a tight knot, he felt loose and buoyant. His feet felt lighter.

Like twisted pillars of rusted metal, the trees reached toward a slate sky. Bo had never seen such tall trees. Branches were tangled into live shapes. Everything was still, as if flora and fauna were waiting for a signal to resume breathing and growing and dying. Only ghosts and wind danced through the trees.

Bo slipped into the woods and the world began again. He was in a twilight world of familiar sounds and phantom forms. Rich, cloying smells hung in the air, perspired from hard wood and spongy leaves. Insects chirped. The ground was full of creepers and green and red leaves. The thick smells and tangled branches reminded Bo of a jungle where fronds and vines grew blindly in eternal evening.

He could not be comfortable here. The forest seemed to be a live thing waiting. He felt trapped, as if he were back in the lifeboat when it was dark and heavy with dead air. Yet he would be safer in the woods than in the open.

But he felt something watching him, something warm and familiar, and suddenly he was homesick.

He moved quickly through the underbrush, stepping carelessly, trying to get away from the pressure of staring eyes. When he stopped to listen, everything paused, and the world was clicked off for a second. Only the wind breathed. And then the living things were scurrying and scratching and screaming again.

Bo could barely sense the other's presence. Although he couldn't hear footsteps, something—someone—filled his head.

Perhaps I'm only feeling the woods, he thought. He didn't trust this dim

world made out of trees and bad dreams.

The forest became darker and he walked under a roof of vines and branches which interlocked like awkward arms. He was passing through a natural colonnade; the trees disappeared into the tangle above. But a few scattered rays of light cut into the greyness like bright swords. Bo was almost afraid to pass through the yellow beams. They appeared to be sharp and tangible, as if they could be shattered with a hammer.

He walked on, finally nearing the edge of the forest where trees and brush looked ghostly against the blinding wash of light. There he discovered a trail. It looked like an often used footpath, wide enough for two people to walk side by side.

But before he had time to put his head to the ground and listen for the rumble of footsteps, he heard a shout. It came from the vicinity of the ship.

"Herehere, by the south-west."

A woman's voice: "The ship's open."

Bo heard footfalls outside the woods, then voices. They were speaking a vulgar pidgin English mixed with Hrau nasals and what he thought was Gerfrank, a dead language. This world must be an old Earth colony, Bo thought. He could understand enough of the language to know that they intended to try flying the ship. Perhaps, if they knew how to operate it, they could give him more time.

Time for what? he thought. He had no plans, except to keep running from Hrau. Perhaps I should have done more with the ship, he thought. If I had learned more . . .

He felt someone watching him again. A nervous presence was very close. He surveyed the area—the ground growth was the color of copper and spinel. Insects buzzed and

clicked. A twig snapped. And he saw a face peering out from behind a spiny thicket.

"I thought you'd come through here. I've been waiting." It was a girl's voice. She stood up and Bo could see that her face was delicate and well-defined by high cheekbones and aquiline nose. Her hair was cropped short and shaggy, and it was blonde as the sun. But she was wearing baggy green pants and a loose overshirt. If Bo had not heard her voice, he might have mistaken her for a young boy.

"Don't be afraid," she said, almost in a whisper, as if she didn't want to disturb the rush and rustle of the forest: "I've been watching you since you left the ship."

"Why? Bo asked cautiously—she was the presence he had felt, the fullness inside his head.

"I saw your ship fall. It looked like a Hrauship. But Hraurau have no port nearby, and would not drop ship here unless something was wrong with one of the big ones. And that couldn't be—if it were, there'd be Hraurau thick as glowbugs at red-night. Yet you ran away from the ship. Why? Are you running from Hrau? Are you from Earth?" Her voice had become strident, but it softened when she said Earth, as if the word alone could conjure the place.

"Come closer," Bo said firmly, although he felt awkward and vulnerable. "I don't want to be heard by . . ." He pointed in the direction of the ship as he stared intently at the girl. Although he was afraid of this stranger who might scream for help at any moment; he wanted to talk to her and find out more about this place.

She stepped carefully through the underbrush, ducking branches and spiny ferns, and stood before Bo in a

small natural clearing where a rough circle of trees seemed to hold back the groundgrowth.

"Well, are you from Earth?"

He nodded, and then stepped back when he saw the creature nestled under her arm. Its head was ebon, made up mostly of two greenish-black eyes which held rainbows in the soft light; its body was lean and mottled, containing all the earth colors of this world and specks of the red sun. Bo had seen in the panel screen. It was fury, an impossible hybrid of mammal and insect, and not more than two feet long.

"What's that?" he asked.

"It won't hurt you. It's only a pet." The small insect-animal seemed to be a neutral being, a palpable ghost which could be felt, but would not be visible in a mirror. It was just there, like a shadow on a warm sunny afternoon.

"What about your friends by the ship?" Bo asked.

"They're not my friends," she said, moving her jaw slightly, as if every word had to pass through the test of teeth, bone, and muscle. Although her face was strong, a slight tremble of her thin bottom lip betrayed her fear. "They come from Bottomtown, north-east of here. It's the closest town. They're drifters mostly, but all tied to different towns so they can keep respectable. They've got nothing to lose by playing with your ship. Hraurau consider us all dumbdums anyhow. They won't bother local hayseeds, just chase them away." The insect-animal wriggled out of her arms and jumped to the ground where it stretched out beside her foot.

Bo wondered if anyone else was near-by. He was getting impatient to leave this place. The drifters' shouts were thin wheezings in the forest, un-

settling growls amidst the snap and chatter of woods animals.

"I don't think they can operate the ship," she said. "Even if they could, they'd be caught. It will probably sit there until Hraurau come looking."

The ship must have sent out a search message, Bo thought. Hrau would find him.

"I'm on my way North to Nineveh; that's about a day from here. The *Fragrant Cloud* is mooring. Lots of excitement, crowds. You'd be safe there."

"What's *Fragrant Cloud*?"

"A sky city," she said, spitting out the words like bad food. Then she crossed the path and headed deeper into the woods.

Bo followed, only wishing to be far away from Hrau and the ship. He would have to take a chance on the girl. But what ulterior motives might she have? he wondered. He'd best not trust her; perhaps she was leading him to Hrau. But he could like her. She had a certain randiness and subtle power which he had seldom found in other folk. Yet, like him, she seemed afraid and curious and somehow vulnerable.

—But, then, so were the Hrau, he thought.

He sensed something warm reach out and tighten around him as they moved deeper into the forest. The texture of life began to change—growth and life were active presences, like seeds in the wind or tiny voices whispering and unafraid. He felt as if he was walking on the back of a sentient being, a mite crawling up a knobbled spine. They were moving upland, creeping toward the mountain wall Bo had seen on the horizon when he landed. It was almost dark in this part of the woods, and Bo thought he smelled the sickly-sweet odor of

bogs—the woods might be flanked by meadowland and swamp. Further north, he thought, would be scrub and stones and mountain feet.

“What’s your name?” he asked. The girl had not spoken for almost an hour, except to the insect animal that scurried along beside her for a few paces and then fell behind, only to be waiting ahead.

“Kezia.” No accent, her voice was flat, disinterested. Although she assumed an air of indifference, Bo could feel her presence as an angry shout—she could never be as neutral as her pet. It was a sponge soaking everything up, leaving a restful emotional vacuum behind. Kezia’s face was a mask. Behind it, Bo imagined, was a procession of animated expressions, smiles and sadness and upwellings of curiosity.

He let her alone and followed, keeping several paces between them. The forest began to change color—an overabundance of spring green and olive had turned to rust: Sunlight leached through the growth above. Columnar trees were more widely spaced and interspersed between them were short brown conifers which bore violet cones and berries. Stopping to inspect a berried plant with a curious hump in the stem, Bo reached out to touch it.

“Don’t touch it,” Kezia said. “The bump in the stem is a spore sac which is in season to burst. It would burn your arms and face, should it explode.”

Bo withdrew his hand. The dark tumor on the stem was partially covered with orange fuzz; upon closer inspection the ripe walls appeared cracked and pitted.

“—It’s called a Puff-plant.”

He remembered once catching a milkweed fluff as it floated on a ruffle

of air, destined to germinate mindlessly in faraway soil, determined by nature to sail away to newer realms, uncertain ground. He had opened his hand and the fluff had blown away, a soft, spiny ship seeking its own space. Perhaps, he thought as he looked at the puff-plant, a similar pressure of nature had forced him to hide in the Hraú shuttle, which was a simpler spore, one conceived by intellect. Perhaps man and all other intelligent beings were merely complex spores, driven to push outward or die. It would be a wasteful process, but nature was a cold mother.

But that was small consolation for Bo. If it was nature that had driven him out across the night, then where would he go now? Would he remain on this odd simulacrum of Earth, trapped under a prison of sky? Somehow, he felt, man—all the folk sitting, vegetating in their lies and Hraú domination—had to push into space and break from their small world.

But to what end? he asked himself. A mindless end, dictated by guts instead of reason? Perhaps, he thought, the answers lay in the darkness above the clouds.

“The forest narrows ahead,” Kezia said. “There’s a marshland and swamp east of us. We’ll work our way north-west into mountainland.” It began to rain and Bo felt as if he was in a hotbox. There was a rumbling, a hint of thunder, and the drizzle abated, leaving a thin fog to clothe the copper and rust tinted flora.

“When does it get dark?” Bo asked.

“There’ll be no darkness for three more months,” Kezia said. “Our red sun will rise in several hours.”

They walked north-west until they cleared the forest which had become a tangle of ground-growth and thick trees fighting for space. Where the

forest ended, meadowland began. Green stems and fronds protruded from the level red-brown grassland like flags in disarray. The wind was easy, bringing the rotting odors of marsh, then dying in the stillness of late afternoon. Father north was a small lake. A crown of hills and rock seemed to define a giantess lying on her back. Her face was mesa. Breasts and legs were hills and hillocks. Bo imagined that she was staring into the lake below. Behind the green giantess was a mountain wall.

A thick column of smoke rose from behind the hills and hung in the air where high breezes could tear away gauzy, dissolving streamers.

"What's that?" Bo asked, pointing toward the smoke.

"Ballyhack." Kezia looked impatient. Her insect-animal was draped over her shoulder like a dead fox. "It's a small industrial town. They do some business with the Hrau."

"What kind of business?"

"Small stuff. For the Hrau ships." She dipped her shoulder and the animal fell to the ground where it scurried around her. With a small smile through gritted teeth, she started walking northward. The shadow of the forest was behind them. The grass still glistened with rain; all the surrounding colors were pastel, not yet dimmed by dusk-down.

"Are you from a town like that?" Bo asked.

No answer. Only her hurried footsteps through meadowland toward the afternoon sun.

And Bo imagined that he was stranded between two walls: the forest and the mountains. From a distance they were both solid, inaccessible, and yet two-dimensional. Even with Kezia he was alone in this world

of walls.

"WE'LL REST HERE," she said. They had passed through a long narrow valley and were now on the flank of a foothill which led to high ground and the scooped side of a plateau. The valley was a hollow of green ending in small lakes and brown, thick-smelling bogs. Stubby trees and spiderweb vines grew from the hillsides like grotesque fingers connected with thread. The tree fingers pointed downward toward a creek which ran through the valley like a silver ribbon. The yellow sun was setting, almost touching the tips of the western mountains.

"It will be red-night soon. Nineveh will be crowded with mardigras drunks by the time we get there. No one will notice you. All the townies will be swilled tonight . . ." Her words trailed off like distant thoughts.

Bo could feel her presence ebb as she drew back into a reverie. As she petted her insect-animal, it seemed that she saw Bo only as a shadow, a two-dimensional man whose words were echoes and windsounds which did not require any response. When she spoke, although her words were slow and deliberate, she seemed to recognize him, and he could sense her fear and curiosity. But he could not push past her wall of silence. It was as if words were welling up in her throat and she could not force her mouth to speak.

"I don't know if I'll go with you to Nineveh," Bo said.

After a long pause Kezia asked, "Are you afraid? You might as well trust me. What other chance do you have?"

Bo didn't reply. He rested in the grass, compared this place with home, and dreamed of new songs. Forget-

ting about his ship and the Hrau, he settled himself with ballads and hymns he had made up and almost forgotten. They were songs about places and things he didn't even understand—trains and computers and baseball and Bach, but he kept the words because they linked him to a past, however uncertain, and gave him a part of that distant world.

As he remembered tunes and associated places and folk, he drew himself away from the girl, forgot her eyes furtively watching him, and her animal which seemed to organize its own time—it only remained with her when the duties of impulse and instinct were finished. Although his voice was shrill, edged with the nervousness of small beasts before a storm, he sang to himself.

He watched the red sun steal into the sky, first as a quiet bleeding behind silhouetted mountains, and then as a fire seen through twilight mists. It pulled red-black shadows out of trees and overruled a green world with an intensity of red. The daytime world of the yellow sun seemed to wither away—green meadows became brown wastes and the umbers of earth and flora had turned violet. The creek was a red vein connecting hill with lake, the exposed organs of a dying beast.

Bo felt uneasy in the new light. He had been brought up on folk religion where Hell played a prominent role, and he had looked into that Hell every time he watched logs glowing inside a fire—it was a tiny world of decaying reefs, a red eye reflecting his passion and despair in the guises of monstrous landscapes that constantly changed.

He felt as if he were inside a pale fire where time had stopped and the ground was crumbling.

"Tell me about Earth," Kezia said, her face dark and livid, her mouth a fluttering creature.

Instead of singing his songs, he retold stories and legends and used all the old words he could remember. But he was really talking to himself, for red-night had wrapped him in a dream and Earth and folk were odd pieces which would not fit in this still, burning world.

Kezia sat beside him—she talked easily now and exhausted him with questions. Her hair was russet in the sunlight and she smelled like leaves in autumn. She was a part of Bo's words, a shadow in his dream of shifting faces and red reefs. Bo brought back Earth slowly, told what came to mind, mixed legends and fables with facts, for they were inseparable—the present was only pieces of the past, Bo thought. Everything had stopped for Earth and folk; only dreams and talk remained as the jetsam of a heroic, submerged time.

"Think of what has been lost," he said as he stared at the clouds of glowbugs hovering over the red creek. "Most of the words that make up the old songs have lost their meaning. But they're still used, as if the sounds could bring back sense. Com-pu-ter—is it a wild animal, a sneeze, or an old man's dream?"

Kezia's pet moved closer to Bo, then lay motionless in the tawny grass. It looked like a brown rock; its dark, diamond eyes were closed.

"—How many old men dreamed and made up words and things that have disappeared from memory? Time destroys the words. So the songs and legends must become fakes, music to fill empty heads."

"Perhaps," Kezia said, watching him intently as glowbugs blinked into white fire between them, "the mean-

ings can be recovered. Maybe even the lost words can be rediscovered. I think there are certain ideas that can't be buried. No matter how many people and centuries pass, those ideas will emerge again—they only need to be found. And with those ideas we can build your words, make computers out of steel instead of legend."

"Then you know about computers and . . ."

A whistle keened over the hills, scattering the glowbugs and waking Kezia's pet.

"Nineveh is due north," she said, pointing toward the mountains. "They've sighted *The Cloud*. We'll make for the cliff road when we reach Northern Mountains. It's the only way to get into town. There will be scads of people on the road with their wares. Everyone will have something to sell or trade."

But the keening made Bo wary again. This might be a trap.

When they reached the top of a high hill, she scanned the sky. "There it is," she said, and Bo could see a silvery sphere hanging in the dull red eastern sky.

"I was born in a sphere like that," Kezia said as they walked. "I can still remember living in close quarters, never any room, but skypeople don't seem to care—they can go where they please, live in the sky and never see Hraur, although some moor near cities and factory towns."

"How does it stay in the sky?" asked Bo. "Is it powered like a Hraurship?"

"It floats like a cloud—now that's something you can make up songs about."

Bo didn't believe her, but he remained quiet; it seemed that the mysterious spheres had accumulated their own share of legends.

"Look," she said, "how do you think clouds are made? Haven't you ever seen a bank of mist hanging in a valley in the early morning? By afternoon the mist has lifted—do you know why?" She paused. "Because the sun shines on the mist and heats it up. The air expands and some of it is pushed out of the mist bank. The mist bank then floats into the sky because it's lighter than the surrounding air. And you have a cloud."

"The floating cities work on the same principle, which is more elegant than anything Hraurau could conceive. The spheres are a half-mile in diameter. The sun heats up the interior atmosphere a few degrees and air is pushed out of the sphere. The air that is pushed out of the sphere is heavier than the sphere itself. So the sphere, including the air inside it, becomes lighter than the outside and floats."

"Of course, that's catechism, there's much more to it than that."

"What's a catechism?" Bo asked.

"That's what we learned by rote. And they taught us well, although rules and history could not be questioned. Everything interesting had to be taken on faith, like 'Yankee Ingenuity.'"

"What?"

"Like you, we have lost many words and meanings. My skyfamily gave old words new meanings, made them fit their view of history and the world. They claimed Yankee Ingenuity meant Divine Witness."

"Why did you leave the cloud city?"

"My father was involved in a political intrigue and was branded and sent down. Mother could have stayed with the family, but she was considered to be out of the law, and would be grounded on mardigras anyway."

Grounded skypeople would have made it Hell for her, so she decided to stay with Father."

"But you could have stayed."

"No, I had to be with mother, or be kicked out by myself—family name is passed on through women. My brother stayed, though; he carried no taint. Things weren't so bad at first. We settled down on a farming commune. As long as we did what we were told, no one asked questions or treated us unkindly. We got up at dawn and prayed and worked and prayed and didn't speak to anyone for most of the day—it was hard getting used to, but it was a good simple life. In some ways it was similar to life in the sky. But Father hated it; all he could think of was freedom, what he thought he had in the sky."

"What happened?"

"Mother worked hardest of all, and she took up their religion and prayed every moment. She even stopped talking to us. Finally, they put her in a holy place where she could pray for everyone in the commune. I went to see her often, but she had her own world. After she died—she had been starving herself for almost a year—Father and I left, although everyone urged us to stay."

"Where is he now?" Bo asked.

But Kezia didn't answer. She quickened her step and walked ahead of Bo. He could feel more than the small distance between them; it was as if she had disappeared over the next hill, leaving a pale shadow, a ruse, to make motions and smalltalk and lead him about the countryside.

Glowbugs swarmed low over rust-colored fields and looked like blinking stars hanging in a red heaven. Bo looked into the sky: the cloud city was well beyond the eastern mountain range and moving in a north-westerly

direction. It was a shiny bauble drifting through the red sun's morning sky, pushing past pink countries of cumulous clouds, making its way toward the amber mountain peaks ahead.

A chill wind braced Bo. Since the yellow sun had set, it had become cooler.

They walked on, always moving upland, until they reached craggy ground which swelled into cliffs and delicate outcroppings. Behind them, the lowlands were hazy with distance. High above, forest grew out of sheer mountainside and huge rocks rested precariously upon natural minarets of smooth stone.

Although they had stopped to rest several times, Bo was tired when he heard the groaning of wagons and the familiar staccato of voices. He couldn't make out any words, just the comforting rush of human sound. Whatever the language, that was the sound of gossip and market. An everpresent echo of history, he thought, remembering that this planet was once an Earth colony. That original colony was a spore that had germinated, but, like a houseplant or window-flower, humankind had been cultivated and stunted by Hrau. Still, the sounds were reassuring. Although Earth no longer had an empire, human chatter still echoed. Gossip outlived starships and cities.

"There's the road," Kezia said, pointing to a dirt path that disappeared behind a rock shelf scattered with dark purple stones. "The way is tricky hereabouts, but it will be easier further on."

The path was crowded with wagons and ragtag vendors. Dogs barked and snapped at children's heels. These mountain people were surefooted and they scrambled around each other

without a glance at the talus only inches from their feet—the tuff-like cliff was a narrow ridge of a palisades which descended into a canyon of purple stone. It was as if the earth had been sheared away, he thought as he looked down upon an oblong mesa and copper colored valley.

The height made him dizzy. He kept to the inside edge of the path, Kezia beside him. Her animal was lost in the crowd. Although some folk spoke Kezia's language, he couldn't understand most of the chatter. It sounded like *hrau* to him.

"They're speaking of our ship," she said.

"How would they know about it?"

"Word always gets passed down the tubes. Many people saw the ship come down."

"Tubes?"

"Old machines that run under the ground. *Hrau* pay no attention to them—I think they were here before *Hrau*. They're dangerous to use; gossip's pretty strong, that says thieves and drifters always wait around in the dark stations. Most people have no use for the tubes anyway, unless they're drifters looking for work in the city, or beggars like yourself."

"I'm not a beggar," Bo said, his words drowned by the gaggle of voices—he had been called that before, in grim towns that had tarred the previous bo and were looking for an excuse to feather the next one. It implied that he was supported by *Hrau* and did their bidding, that all his songs and gossip were *Hrau* lies.

"No offense meant," she said dryly. "Anyway, there's always a drifter to pass the word."

"Have you ever used the tubes?"

She didn't answer. The sun was at eleven o'clock in the sky. Before him, across chasms of rock, Bo could see

Nineveh in the distance, a town cut into the face of a cliff. Its cliff dwellings commanded the canyon.

"Gossip is that *Hrau* found your ship," she said. Her face tightened when she listened to the chatter, as if she were trying to contain a storm inside her head.

Bo looked up to see the cloud city approach the sun.

4.
WHEN BO AWAKENED, it was dim in the small, neat room. The window near the ceiling permitted the pale yellow light to suffuse the room. Dust danced overhead and ghosts seemed to be moving about. Red-night would be creeping behind the dusk, Bo thought, blinking away the ghosts. He felt listless and heavy, as if he had experienced the full six months of red and yellow sun. It was as if his body was not quite conditioned to the new subjective time.

Kezia moved beside him. She's not yet a friend and might still turn against me, he thought as he touched her arm, feeling more alone with the touching. If they had made love, it would have been like two shadows crossing. She was alone, and he couldn't scratch through her walls. But he had held her while she slept.

Muffled by stone walls, the noise outside sounded like waves crashing upon rocks.

"What are you going to do?" Kezia asked, as if she had rehearsed those words as she slept and only awakened to say them.

Bo didn't reply. He stared at the high window and listened to the familiar gaggle of town sounds, the gutturals of market and argument and celebration. He had come home, he thought, by the very act of leaving. He was still trapped on an earth with

Hrau and folk. Nothing had changed but the details, the quirks of place and society—but even that might be an illusion, he thought. The relationships of people and place might be vastly different than he could imagine. Although this world was younger than his own, it seemed more subtle and complex, and it had a longer memory. Kezia still remembered old words such as steel and cyborg, and even claimed to know their true meaning. By comparison, he thought, his own words were only colorful fillers for empty poems and songs.

"*The Cloud* must be moored and settled by now," Kezia said, watching her insect-animal which had somehow found its way to the window ledge above. She sat up and rested against the wall beside the straw bed. "People are probably already going up the lines. I can hear the shouting from here."

"Are you going up?" Bo asked.

"Yes, I think my brother is in *The Cloud*."

"And if he is?"

"Then I could join a family—he would have to be my sponsor. I'm not so sure that I want skypeople's freedom. But it would give me a place."

There was a lot of noise and shuffling of feet outside the door. It sounded like a mob, Bo thought, remembering Earth towns and tar. Then the door flew open and a paunchy woman stepped into the room. She had a wrinkled, freckled face and greased grey hair pulled back into a shiny bun.

"Dinnertime," she said. "How long can you sleep?"

Bo could see people milling about the large hallway.

"*Cloud's* been moored for hours. If you want to find your kin," she said

to Kezia, "you'd better do it soon. After trade hours you won't get near a line. And I'd move up, or move on; people are talking about your friend. Some recognize you, but they're making rumour that your friend isn't People. And since you have no name, *you* certainly can't make him kin." She giggled, as if she had just made a joke.

The woman was a strong presence, Bo thought. There was a warmth about her, especially toward Kezia, but there was also mistrust. Bo could feel it like a chill across his eyes. Yet she had given them a bunk, talked others into believing they were people, and had spent hours talking to Kezia in familiar language, as if she were family. But for all her familiar words and tenses, she was as formal as an aunt—her smiles and chatter and apparent idiosyncrasies seemed to be practiced; she was not able to bring herself out of her oily shell of fear.

"Take food and leave. That's good advice," she said. "And have your friend wash and shave his face. He looks as if he's just stumbled out from some filthy *stad*." She laughed, then turned and left the room.

"She's right," Kezia said. "You'd be less conspicuous if you shaved. There's a basin and razor on the table."

"She could have knocked on the door," Bo said, lathering his face with brown soap. He had only the shadow of a beard, but his skin was still oily and slippery from contact with the ooze in the Hraushuttle's drainage tube.

"Why should she knock?" Kezia asked. "The door is only to block the light and keep out the noise. Everything in skytowns is common property."

"What if we were making love?"

"In late afternoon? On a mooring day?" She giggled, almost sounding like Bey, the woman who had just left the room. "It's within custom to enter any door, although you might find yourself with a broken nose if you rush into the wrong room."

"She could have knocked." Bo wiped his face, placed the razor on the table, and stared at his reflection in the soapy basin water. He saw a stranger's face, which was weathered with only a few deep lines.

"That would offend, for it implies that someone would *want* to keep others out. But Bey does want us out of here, for her sake and ours."

"I don't trust her," Bo said as Kezia's pet stalked into the hallway and disappeared underfoot.

"You're wrong," Kezia said, walking to the partially open door and kicking it closed, seemingly unconcerned that her pet was absent. "She's afraid. By covering for us, she has put herself outside of her family and law. She must live with that, even if she is not called to account.

"Skypeople have an open society, and this town has the same rules and customs as sky cities. Everyone here, except the mountain people and vendors, is descended from families still in the sky. In an open society people live and think openly together. Privacy is only a state of mind—a stillness, a self-knowledge that does not need a closed room. The awareness of oneself is not lost if it's shared. But the privacy of acts is frowned upon. You may not *do* something in secret with another. That is a crime. That's why doors are not locked.

"Of course, that's all catechism. But Bey believes in it. In her way she's very religious; and until we came she was not a private person. Now she

has guilt, which is no sin, except she has to keep it to herself."

"Then why did she help us, if it breaks all her rules?" Bo asked.

"She knew my father. She might even be my true mother. But it doesn't matter—she knows you're not from this side of the country, and from her hints and smiles, I'd guess that she figures you to be a Faubougher."

"What?"

"It means 'friend-of-the-Hrau,' or anyone who is not from here. Everyone knows about the landing of the Hrauship, and rumours are flying. Even with the clothes she gave you, you don't look like people, and you certainly don't sound like people: your accents are all wrong. And much of what you say is gabble."

"Well," Bo said, his hand resting on the wooden door-handle, "I'm not waiting around to find out whose side she's on."

"You'd better stay to eat. Sharing food is an important custom, and we'll be watched, as will Bey. If you leave now, some people will think something is wrong with you and word will spread. You might be followed out of town. So you might as well trust Bey."

"We would have been better off in the streets," Bo said.

"You are safe from Hrau and branglers in here."

"I would have been safer on the run," he said, but they were empty words. Kezia, at least, could point out a direction home.

"There's a chance," she said, "that if I can find my brother in *The Cloud*, I might be able to bring you along. He could acknowledge you as kin."

"You'd go back to that life?" Bo asked. But she was tired and afraid, he thought. She wanted rules and

walls, a safe prison of freedom in the sky.

Bo opened the door and followed her into the empty hallway which was decorated with small red stones set into rough wall. Most of the doors to the neatly spaced rooms were either open or ajar. The closed doors reminded him of a particular corridor on the Hrauship, and he could not shake the irrational fear that a Hrau might suddenly step out of one of the rooms. He felt Kezia's emotional distance; it was as if he were walking alone.

He could only laugh at himself and Kezia's walls and the imaginary Hrau hiding behind the door; and Kezia, probably thinking Fauboughers must all be a bit crazy, took his hand.

"Why do you need these doors if privacy is something to share?" Bo asked.

Kezia laughed. "People make love. They have different jobs and hours. They need the freedom of open doors."

After several turns, they found the large dayroom at the end of the hall. Children and adolescents stood in the entranceway and were silhouetted by the cold yellow light streaming in through the west windows. The grumble of conversation was accompanied by the constant clatter of metalware.

"We're late," Kezia said. "Look for Bey."

But Bey was watching for them. She waved and motioned them over to the chairs she had leaned against the table.

"Hello, sleepers." She smiled and moved around in her chair, playing at being light and silly. Bo felt her coldness, and a thin edge of fear.

Everyone passed them food: large bowls filled with steaming greens and

sour smelling meat. Bo accepted everything and, at Kezia's insistence, overfilled his plate.

"Keep eating," she whispered; and Bo tried to feign an appetite. But his stomach had shrunk from the use of Hrau food capsules. Although the food was overwhelmed by the spice and tang of the marinated meat, it was warm and good. Bo only hoped he would not vomit before he left the room.

Bey and Kezia kept up a constant front of chatter, most of which Bo could not understand. But a man sitting across from him was insistent: he directed his questions at Bo, and grunts and 'ayahs' would not suffice as responses. Bo could understand him well enough, but he was afraid he could not match the man's accents.

"What you got to trade with *The Cloud*?" the man asked, his open mouth full of half-masticated greens.

"We're not here to trade," Kezia said. "We're meeting my brother."

"That right," said the man, staring at Bo. "But I'm asking him."

Bo froze for an instant, and then tried to settle into the room, tried to think himself into the welter of voices and the frenzy of hands and animated faces. There must be three hundred people in this room, he thought. Listen to their tongues clucking, puffing out the words. Any words, he thought.

"She can speak for me," he said, catching the intonation of a dark woman talking to her companion at the end of the long table. He could just sense a thought pattern that would work, feel right for these people in this cold, yellow room. "You from *The Cloud*?" Bo asked, parrying, hoping he had not made a mistake, and then not caring, just wishing it would be over so he could

run or be caught. He needed an end, a destination; and Kezia, only an arm'slength away, was only another wall.

The man opposite Bo blushed and he gaze shifted, as if he were looking for an object to focus upon, a place to rest. "No," he said. "We're not from *The Cloud*. Don't know what city we're traced to; just know we're people. That's enough."

Bo passed a plate of meat to Kezia, who had the flicker of a smile on her dark face. "How much longer?" he asked.

"Soon," she said, and then launched into an animated conversation with several women. Bo couldn't understand any of the words, but he found the singsong quality of the strange language soothing. He looked through the large west windows: the sky city was out of sight and the rocks were full of shadows.

The grumble of conversation grew louder, then turned to shouts as people stood up to leave. They bowed, shouted, laughed, danced and swung their arms about, as if the end of the meal was a time to let out the repressed energies that had accumulated during the day. Children ran out of the room, screaming good-byes into the echoing hallway, while adults lingered to make their noise together.

"Let's go," Bo said, swallowing vomit. But Kezia and Bey waited until almost half the room had cleared. They waved at each other and shouted at friends. Finally Kezia nudged Bo to leave.

Once out of the high ceilinged day-room, they had to fight the rush in the narrow, winding hallways. Everyone was quiet now, doggedly pushing to get back to the day's business before red-night overcame the dusk. Bo watched the repressed howlers

making their way around him. It was like the end of a Fashing Celebration, he thought. The moment the holiday was officially over, folk would leave the parties and games and return to work. It was as if there had never been a celebration. The hurricane of shouting in the dayroom had turned to whispers in the halls. Business was now the force that pushed and pulled folk through town.

Bo found a washroom and threw up. When he was finished, he saw Kezia's insect-animal staring at him from behind the scarred wooden basin. He could see his image reflected and distorted in its greenish-black eyes, and, for an instant, he thought he saw himself as other people in different places. If the world was being rebuilt inside the insect-animal's rainbow eyes, Bo was watching the transformation. He felt trapped, as if he were back in the dark lifeboat again and gasping for air.

—It's only a Hraumachine, Bo thought, imagining that he was in a dark booth and dreaming programmed dreams.

—But you killed the Hrau.

"That's what you get for taking the Hraurau's substitute for meat and greens," Kezia said, stepping into the room. "Pretty soon you'll be addicted and you'll have to sing in Hrauhouses for your dinner."

Bo blushed, thinking how close she had come to the truth. He felt steadier now. His head had cleared and his stomach was empty, although it still burned from the spiced meat—he kept swallowing, hoping to drown the tiny fire with bitter saliva. Yet something niggled at him like a dream he had almost forgotten, an air that could not be put to words. He looked around for Kezia's pet, but it was not in the room.

"Where's your animal?" Bo asked.

"It followed Bey down the hall."

"And Bey?"

"Just left," Kezia said. "We won't see her again." She stared at Bo for several seconds, although Bo was sure she wasn't seeing anything but old, cold memories. She looked like a child standing in a room full of discarded toys. He noticed a broom propped against the far wall like a stick doll. Cobwebs, like strands and tufts of grey hair, clung to the dark corners, and something glinted atop one of the basins.

"Are you ready to leave now?" she asked. "We shouldn't waste time here. We'll be waiting long enough in the queues to get a ladder line."

But her eyes are always hard, Bo thought, as fear replaced a gentle urge to comfort her. He followed her through the hallways. Although they passed many people no one spoke. He took comfort in the silence—it was a rich quiet, full of dead whispers and human smells. It was as if the mountains were swallowing the shouts, padding and protecting the town from the nervousness of takers and sellers.

When the north door of the common house was in sight, Bo asked: "Is this your freedom of restraint?"

Kezia answered by opening the door. Children's shouts and vendors' rantings echoed sharply in the halls.

"Do you prefer this?" Kezia shouted as she stepped into the hubbub. But Bo blocked out the vendors and brats screaming for attention. He could see the *Fragrant Cloud* floating about four hundred feet above the west edge of town. It cast a long, grey shadow that could not quite swallow the streets and squares. Like a mirror in the sky, its silvery skin reflected the fading amber of sunset.

Soon, Bo thought, it would mirror the bleeding tendrils of sunrise. Red-night would change the world, erase the yellow sun from memory, and burn the land in a cold fire.

He grabbed a ragamuffin's hand that had found his pocket. The boy yelped, pulled free, and disappeared into the crowd. These mountain people don't belong here, Bo thought, daydreaming now about the silver ball floating through flat, pastel skies. Kezia was right: there was a natural quietness and security to this place, and the common house was like a sky city, a solemn place made out of air and imagination. And Stone and rules, he thought, bringing back reality and the memory of sour meat.

Then who belongs here, he asked himself. Only dreamers, pretenders? Mountain people, at least, have life and raw emotion. But he felt the attraction of the common house and the ball in the sky. They were both safe places, he imagined. Prisons of sadness and freedom. Their rules were like lost lovers, providing only the safety of hindsight and solitude.

Kezia took his hand and they walked down a narrow, dusty street toward the mooring lines. Fingers of soft light silhouetted the mountains in the distance. The grey peaks looked as if they were soaring, drifting in the smoky light before they faded into the red-night.

"Did the brat take anything?" Kezia asked.

"What could he have stolen?" Bo reached into his pocket. "The food capsules are gone. They're all I had."

"All the better for you," Kezia said. "Hrau will make you sick. Anyway, the brat wouldn't take your pills. He'd be disgraced. You probably lost them in the common house. For your own good."

"Is that your freedom of possessions?" Bo asked, worrying how he would make his way to another Hrauport. Without pills, he would have to forage for food or beg—and his songs and legends would be of no use with Hrau behind him. His stomach would tie him to his planet.

—Kezia knows her way. But her only interest is the ball in the sky.

So now I've left the Hrau to become dependent on a scatgirl, he thought. I have the freedom of infants and old men. He laughed at himself and his memories and his words which seemed to be only prisons for his thoughts.

"That's a nasty laugh," Kezia said, disengaging her hand from him.

As they approached the moorings, Bo could see the filigree of lines and ladders which connected the sky city with the shadow-dark rocky floor. The traders and vendors and townsfolk looked like tiny black spiders scrambling up their webs to reach the round silver bug trapped in this corner of the sky.

"Aren't you worried about your pet?" Bo asked. The twilight greyness was almost palpable. It seemed as if sky and ground would solidify in the instant before sunrise. The red sun would shrink the world; and the world, in turn, would erect its walls.

"Why should I worry?" Kezia asked. "It's right here." Bo saw the insect-animal tucked under her arm.

"It wasn't here a moment ago," Bo said.

"Yes it was. I picked it up when I pulled my hand away from you. You were squeezing very hard."

Bo felt the claustrophobia of twilight until the red sun began to suffuse the sky like a dye leaking into turbid water. With the coming of the red sun, the shouting began—hushed

commands and murmurings gave way to catcalls and singsongs. The world had corrected itself, left the yellow sun and grey insecurity to memory. Children dashed about as if they had just escaped from bed and locked doors. But Bo could not feel easy under the alien sun. It was a huge torpid creature crawling toward him, tearing the sky.

"Look," Kezia said. "*The Cloud* is opening up." She pointed toward the narrow, barely visible openings in the sky city's shell.

Bo repressed an urge to stroke her hair which had turned russet in the new sunlight. She was being polite, but distant, as she had been when they slept together. If he touched her, she would not move away or take notice. It would be like brushing past a child, a stranger, on the street.

"Soon," she said, "the whole frame will open to let in the sun."

Bo shifted his attention to her pet. "Does it always know where to find you?"

"Yes."

"But if we were already half-way up a ladder line?"

"That wouldn't happen," she said. "It always finds me before I leave."

As they walked between ladder and mooring lines, Kezia began to mirror the crowd's excitement; but Bo was wary of the people and the place. Worry turned to anxiety, and he was afraid to look at the grinning, jawing, sugar-apple faces that seemed to be bobbing about, as if they were on puppet strings. Bo was afraid that the next face would be grey and thin. He imagined Hrau faces in every shadow and abrupt movement. His memories became a transparent overlay upon the two-dimensional geography of moorings and sky. He remembered other faces and rhymes and bad

times. And he remembered the clay colored insides of a Hrau's nose as an obscene mouth.

"Let's try this ladder," Kezia said, walking toward a queue of impatient vendors and mountain people. A burly official wearing a tattered, stained raglan stood beside the rope ladder and inspected vendors' wares. The line moved slowly and Bo wondered if the folk ahead of him would ever grow weary of shouting.

Before their turn came to face the official, Kezia lowered her arm and the insect-animal slid to the ground. It crawled about and then settled beside Bo's foot.

"Most people ignore it," Kezia said, looking at her pet. "I even wonder sometimes if it's really there and not just a brown ghost. But you noticed it."

"Does it have a name?" Bo asked, feeling his leg stiffen. He was holding himself very still, as if he were waiting for Kezia's pet to plot its territory, define its presence. Cats used to make him feel the same way, he thought, remembering nights when he could not shift his sleeping position for fear of waking a tom that was draped over his legs.

"No," Kezia said. "I never thought to give it a name. It's not that kind of animal. It's just there."

She's right, Bo thought, trying to identify the creature's "beingness" in familiar terms. Insect-animal. Toad. Cat. But there was something more, he thought, something else that took over as another presence. And Bo could feel that presence like bright light upon closed eyes. He realized that it had occupied a space in his mind, but it was so subtle that hum-drum thoughts could push it away.

"—Your purpose?" asked the official. His lips hardly seemed to move.

He ignored Bo; his eyes were fixed on Kezia. Waving her arm for effect, she replied in the singsong language Bo had heard in the dayroom.

They argued, and the official let them pass, but not before he patted Bo's pockets with the back of his hand.

"It's just a formality," Kezia said. "If you had coins, he'd take a few."

Then they were climbing the coarse rope ladder. Bo lost himself for a few seconds in the simple exhilaration of movement. This is Kezia's freedom of the sky, he thought, looking around, scanning the rust-brown ground. A fine copper colored ash seemed to be falling in the distance, filling the sky, submerging the mesas, valleys, and mountains. His nightmares roiled in the distant haze. He watched the steam-phantoms of Hrau faces and looked into Hell's oceans.

"It's raining in north-west," Kezia said. "Swamp fog will lift, push over here soon." Letting her arms take her weight, she looked down at him as she talked. "I wouldn't look over the cliffs. You might turn dizzy."

"Why must everyone climb to the city to trade?" Bo asked, shouting against the wind. "It would be simpler to do business on the ground."

"It's custom. Skypeople stay in the sky. That's their place."

Enough catechism, Bo thought. He watched the people milling about below him. Distance muted their shouts, lent a certain charm to the hand-wagging rush and bluster. But there was something wrong in the quiet frenzy. Something on the northern edge of the moorings. Like fishnetters, several thin lanky men stood on a rocky spur.

—Not men, Bo thought.

"Keep climbing," Kezia said.

"I see something."

"I saw them, too. They're Hraurau, for sure. But they've been seen here before. Don't panic; we might not have to come back down."

Bo felt a tiny snake of fear uncoil inside him. He looked upward, trying to forget the ground, hoping to hide in the red heaven of the *Fragrant Cloud*. He would worry about escaping from the sky city when he was safe.

They climbed the rest of the way without talking. Bo felt the strain of the climb in his arms and legs. The aching in his arms turned to numbness. His fingers were raw from contact with the coarse rope. For an instant, before they climbed through the hatchway, Bo felt that everything was upside down—he was scrabbling headfirst down the ladderline, straight into a brown, rock-filled sky, then stepping down to the sky city.

The world righted itself once he was inside the city. They stepped from the ladder to a narrow metal shelf, which was just a platform for a gangway ladder.

"We'll climb to the next perch," Kezia said, looking up at a shelf fifty feet above them.

Bo climbed again. Few of the panels below him were open, except for hatchways, but the eastern quadrant of the sphere was an open frame. Crosshatchings of beams, cables, gantries, and stanchions seemed to hang in the red light, spanning the sphere like delicate bridges. The living areas must be on the tiers, he thought, looking at the opposite side of the city, a relief of clouded shingles. The western side of the sphere was a mirror, reflecting the smoky red sunlight onto every surface, changing perspectives, bleaching out the shadows of line and brattice.

They stepped onto a shelf that ex-

tended about a hundred feet to the adjacent metal palisade that rose to support grillwork balconies and roofs. Children lined the balconies; they shouted and spat at the crowd below. From where Bo was standing, the wall above the palisade looked like a sheet of clouded hyalite.

"Watch out for the children above you," Kezia said, stepping over piles of wares that were spread about on the floor. Vendors yelled hoarsely and waved their hands, making angry gestures toward children and officials. Several old men balanced on the edge of the shelf and baited an audience of jeering adolescents, daring them to test their courage.

Bo watched the old men dancing like painted marionettes on a stage, and he thought up a rhyme. As he perspired in the heat, he remembered Southtown sunsets and dying embers. Red worlds of his own. He reworked his rhyme and wiped his forehead.

Kezia had left to find an official. If she could find her brother, they could leave the crowded shelf and make preparation for the new freedom. Bo could only wait and watch the people around him. He picked small groups out of the crowd, tried to listen to their babble, watched their ceremonies as if he were a spectator standing in the middle of a show. They were all dancers and mimers. It was another Fashing, Bo thought. But this was a grim celebration. There was no laughter, just shouting and the guttural crackling of argument. Only the old men seemed to be having fun.

A few young boys with braided hair joined the old men on the edge of the shelf.

"Ayah, Faubougher," someone shouted above him.

Others joined in a chorus:

"FaubougherFaubougherFaubougher."

Bo looked up at the ragged children crowding the balconies. They were screaming and spitting and pointing at him.

"Ayah, nobody man."

The crowd moved away from him. Whispers. Bo noticed old men in the balconies, waving their arms, talking, and boxing the ears of recalcitrant children. He felt the pressure of cold stares and hard faces, a subtle pressure that would push him to the edge of the shelf. For an instant Bo thought everything had stopped. He was in the between time of a dream where nothing moved and no one breathed. He was in the fire, he thought. Standing in the embers. The red sunlight was only Hell's ocean.

Then, as if on cue, the crowd became a melee of shouting and children and business. It was as if nothing had happened, as if the stares and hush of the crowd had been pushed out of memory, erased from real time.

Once again Bo was hidden in the crowd. He could enjoy watching and being among these people. There was security in the tribal closeness, in the press-and sweat of human bodies.

When Kezia returned, she looked anxious and irritated. But she had lost her presence, Bo thought. She was a shadow. A wall. There could be no closeness.

"What happened?" Bo asked.

"I can't find the animal," Kezia said. "I thought it was resting on my shoulder when we climbed. Now I don't know. I think it stayed on the ground."

Bo couldn't remember seeing her pet. But it was such a neutral being, he thought. It could be hiding in the air, swallowing its own presence.

—Like Kezia, he thought.

"What did the officials say?" Bo

asked. "Can we stay?"

"Haven't you noticed the change in the crowd? We're not here. We're air." She paused, stood very still, as if she were praying. "No one will see us."

A husky man dragging a torn hide bag along the floor pushed into Kezia, knocking her aside. He had looked directly at her, through her. As he continued to make his way through the crowd, he laughed and waved at his friends. Flushed with anger, Bo started after the man, but Kezia grasped his hand and smiled wanly.

"It's no use," she said. "We're shut out. Although a few branglers will try to push us around, most folk will try not to see us. They'll make-believe until they believe, until they're deaf to our shouts and blind to our faces. It's an old custom, and stronger than steel and stones."

"What happened to your brother?" Bo asked, sensing the crowd's concealed hostility. There would be no place to hide. The crowd was of one mind; and he felt like the target, the empty place in the mob.

"He must have followed my father. They've buried my name forever."

"Then you'll be going down, I suppose," Bo said, thinking of the Hrau he had seen on the northern edge of the moorings. "But I might as well take my chances here."

Kezia laughed shrilly, nervously, then suddenly shook her head. Bo remembered the deathspasms of the Hrau that had died in his arms. "The rules are fixed, but not rigid," Kezia said. "They are open to interpretation. Someone would push you off a shelf or just happen to be swinging something sharp in the air. Although people have lost their names and survived in the sky, it's not possible for a Faubougher. You would either die or

become shatterbrained."

Bo followed Kezia. She pushed through the crowd and kept away from the edge of the shelf, for which Bo was thankful. There was fighting and pushing and old men merrily screaming. Invisible folk had to watch their way, Bo thought, as he stepped out of a youth's path. Still, someone cuffed his ear. Kezia was more agile than Bo: she zigzagged and side-stepped and suffered only a few kicks and bruises.

"Hurry," Kezia said. "The ladderlines are leeward, toward the mirror, there."

An old woman elbowed him in the ribs. As he stumbled and gasped for air, he noticed that the woman was smiling at him. It was a buck toothed grin set into a grandmother's face.

"—the rules are open to interpretation."

Bo felt as if he was running from a brush fire, blindly rushing with the rest of the frenzied animals. He had once been caught in a fire near Farthingtown. He could still remember the acrid smells and chattering sounds of that night. The sky was a tinted rose; he thought. It was etched in his memory, still as strong as his last breath.

Monsters flashed in his mind as he superimposed animal images over the friendly faces around him. He was rushing toward the mirror with snothogs, baboons, bears, boars, rats, cats, housedogs, and Hrau.

—But there's no Hrau here, he thought.

He learned to tell which folk were watching, seeing, stretching custom to include swipes and punches at the air which was Bo and Kezia. He could feel the blood and hate pounding inside their nock-innocent friendly faces.

They came upon a row of ladder openings near a break in the ledge. Part of the floor downward to continue as another shelf. There was a crowd milling about, pushing forward to get out of the steel city. It was a stampede; Bo thought, as he watched the folk howling and scurrying like frightened animals. They're running into the fire, he thought, looking away from the mirror. He had a headache. It was as if the red light was seeping into his head, filling it with poison.

Kezia clasped his hand tightly.

"What are you going to do?" Bo asked, aware of her dark presence, reminded once again that she was his security.

But then they were in the rush of the crowd. It pounded against them. Pushed them back. But they held on, ignored the kicks and fists, broke through the wall of people. They fought for space, forgot they were air and became part of the crowd. The crowd was a cozy animal with many arms. Its thoughts and bodies were all directed.

Then Bo and Kezia were climbing down the ladderline, past the shelves, and steel reefs of the city. The noise grew more distant as Bo relaxed and thought only of aching arms and legs and smooth movement. There was a boy with short hair and earlocks below him, and Kezia above. They all fell into the same tempo. Even there on the ladder, Bo felt a rhyme growing inside him. A song turned out of fear.

When they were out of the sky city, Kezia shouted, "I'm going with you." But for Bo it was a faraway voice, another melody made out of wind and fear. He felt as if the red sky and ground were being squeezed together, pressing him against the flat

(cont. on page 91)

Barry Malzberg is no stranger to regular readers of this magazine; he was its editor in 1968 and has contributed fiction to its pages (and to those of its companion publication, *FANTASTIC STORIES*) since then. Now he steps back to take an impressionistic look at the long course of the history of both *AMAZING* and the science fiction field—

DOWN HERE IN THE DREAM QUARTER

BARRY N. MALZBERG

FOR THE DREAM always lay central to the literature, the literature began in dreams. Rip Van Winkle and the horseman of the hollow, the deerslayer moving deathly still through all the forests of the mind, Huck pulling Jim from the terrible river. Sister Carrie in Chicago rocking and rocking away her mortality, eyes closed, the stare inward toward what she might have been, might still become. Hemingway's laughing Indian, the red badge of courage for those who fled the cannon. They came to America in full pursuit, empty for the continent and somewhere between the other our dreams, our machines, our literature, the engines of our power whispered that they were the same.

The land and our pain merged.

But it was in 1926, a hundred and fifty years down the dark way before the dream was labelled, lopped off: a radio engineer named Gernsback owned a publishing house and from his desire to promote scientific careers for teenage boys came the first issue of *AMAZING STORIES*: it went on sale for the first time fifty years ago this month. *Scientifiction* was Gernsback's term for what he was

publishing and he ran reprints of Wells and Verne in the hope that a new and special literature of scientific device would come from Americans . . . a literature which would advance the cause of science lo! even unto the bedrooms of Forest Hills or the midwest and would make those wonders and possibilities not frightening but beautiful. The headless horseman had a name, Irving's dusky and mysterious river ran through factory-lined banks. It had a name and slowly, slowly in the second quarter of the century of print and machines the wheels moved, ah they moved.

AMAZING lurched through a few years, failed, was sold to Tek Publications, picked up again. *Astounding* joined it in January of 1930, failed for George Clayton, was picked up by Street & Smith in 1933. Continued. John Campbell succeeded Orlin Tremaine there. Other magazines followed in the mid to late thirties, one of them Gernsback's own *Wonder Stories*. Letter columns, fandom, conventions. Ray Cumming's golden atom blew up in 1945. Suddenly there were anthologies, hardcover novels, paperback novels, forty other

magazines in the nineteen fifties, hundreds more novels, millions of readers. A science fiction world. Gernsback died forty years after it had begun. Campbell died in 1971. Most of the magazines died. The novels had not. The writers had not. AMAZING had not. It is fifty years old today; a quarter as old as America, the cerebrum has one quarter the bulk of the old brain. Will s-f live to be a hundred? It is very difficult to say: for one thing will America make two hundred and fifty? Who is to say? Who can know? We congregate; we have survived. We are the people. We are here. *Let us now praise famous men.*

Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us: Let us praise Gernsback who believed that science was good and knowledge power; let us praise Harry Bates who gave Clayton Astounding and wrote *Farewell to the Master* about a kind machine. And F. Orlin Tremaine, Ray Cummings, Clifford Simak, Will F. Jenkins and Jack Williamson, the last three originators who had not one but three careers as they followed the dream where it would. Let us praise John Wood Campbell who called it literature, knew it had to be literature if it would survive and in the intimation both served and shielded us from fate because if it had not been for Campbell science fiction after all might have died at the end of the nineteen thirties or at the latest by the early fifties along with all the other categories of pulp fiction. Remember that if Gernsback was the rock then it was Campbell who was the prophet giving the spirit life, and whatever errors he might have made as time froze upon him, there would have been none of us today without

him. We would have been utterly scattered, would not have known the language of our longing.

Remember Harl Vincent, Raymond Z. Gallun, Arthur K. Barnes and all the others who tended the light before. Campbell came to shape it. Remember Stanley Weinbaum who would have been only in his early seventies right now and who might have been the best of them all just as he was the best in his own time.

They have wrought great glory by them through his great power from the beginning: And Campbell wrought great glory through them. Name the names who brought the machinery to life: Heinlein who understood it all almost too early, Asimov and del Rey and de Camp and van Vogt, van Vogt who knew that at the center of the century lurked a thing without a face that killed for profit, del Rey who knew of the near, foreign places, de Camp who knew that the future, not only the past, was archaeology, was lived in the interstices of the human condition. And Kuttner, tragic Henry Kuttner and beautiful Catherine Moore whose range knew no apparent limits and who gave us Gallegher and Fury and the Private Eye. Is anybody listening? Is any of this important? Does any of this make a difference? Who writes this kind of crap? Who reads this kind of crap? Ask Sturgeon of "Thunder and Roses" and "Killozer." Ask Cleve Cartmill who deduced the Bomb and published a 1944 story, "Deadline." The bomb fell. Now many of us began to understand that they might be living in the end of days: that there were very possibly people on the planet at that time who might see the end of humanity.

And they met at Potsdam. The editorship of AMAZING fell to

Raymond Palmer. Gernsback was out of the business; he thought he had found a Better Way. He was publishing *Sexology* now. Groff Conklin, Raymond Healey, Francis McComas appeared with the first great postwar anthologies. *And they all had great power from the beginning.* Phillip Klass. Tom Sherred who noted that the most wonderful of inventions would be seized by governments to corrupt and kill. Judith Merrill. Eric Frank Russell. A. Bertram Chandler. Peter Phillips. Dreams are sacred.

All were honoured in their generations and were the glory of their times: Cyril Kornbluth, Frederick Pohl, Robert Sheckley, Damon Knight, James Blish, Edgar Pangborn, James Gunn, all of these writers who the new magazines, the new audience, the new, quieter horrors of the fifties brought into the field. *All of them were honoured in their generations.* Alfred Bester who won the first Hugo award for *The Demolished Man*. Sturgeon and *More Than Human* for the International Fantasy Award. Sturgeon again. *More Than Human* always. Horace Gold, the first editor of *Galaxy*, perhaps the greatest editor in the history of all fields for the first half of his tenure: ah, Horace, who saw history as spite. Boucher and McComas who desired grace although grace was hard bought in the decade of Ike, the Starfire and Edsel, Army-McCarthy and Levittown. And the Four Coins. Adlai was out of joint. Phillip K. Dick and *Solar Lottery*. Kris Neville and Katherine MacLean and Roger Aycock and Robert Flint Young. Hubbard, the redhead, scooted off into dianetics, Campbell in mourning took up parapsychology, the Hieronymus and Dean Drives. Raymond Palmer took Shaver to *Oher Worlds* and the editorship of

AMAZING came to Howard Browne who gave s-f Mickey Spillane. Still, AMAZING sold 150,000 copies in those years, fifteen times its initial circulation, maybe more than *Astounding* and *Galaxy* together. Persistence of myth. *Surface Tension*. *A Case of Conscience*. *The Issue at Hand*. F.L. Wallace. Slowly and painfully a small group of writers in this decade were struggling toward the realization that it might be art, that work could be done in it to equal the best work anywhere. They got together and talked about it a lot. *The Space Merchants*. "Preferred Risk." "When You're Smiling" and "Time Waits for Winthrop." "Crucifixus Etiam." The awards became institutionalized, the conventions were international. Attendance went over a thousand. Donald Wolheim built Ace Books. *They were the glory of their times.* Walter Miller, Jr. and Jerome Bixby and "The Quest for St. Aquin." *For their light has gone out all over the lands and as if in a shout we praise them.* *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. A.J. Budrys.

There be of them that have left a name behind them . . . and some there might be which have no memorial: who perished as though they had never been and are become as they had never been born but whose righteousness hath not been forgotten: with their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance. Mark Clifton, Roger Phillips Graham, Cyril M. Kornbluth, P. Schuyler Miller, Henry Kuttner, Charles R. Tanner, Miriam Allen deFord, Will F. Jenkins, Stanley Weinbaum, Malcolm Jameson, James Blish, John W. Campbell, Jr. Time has turned for science fiction as for the century and America: now the field enters the time of its necrology.

It was always, here is the pain, such a young field, created spontaneously in 1926, its first practitioners starting off so early that in the nineteen fifties most of the elder statesmen had not yet left their forties and because of this, became almost everyone who had ever written science-fiction was still writing it now it was a happy field, that happiness joined to an essentially optimistic vision of the future which some of them believed in, of course some of them did not. *Fred Brown. Harl Vincent.* The critics did not know that the literature of technology and its effects upon man must at the heart be pessimistic; they did not know (and we did not then know either) that what is born even in wonder must also die and at last, slowly, the layers of the field were peeled back in the late fifties, the sixties revealing the gnarled and damaged heart. The magazines died, almost all of them, and the specialty presses folded but the century went on and so in its way did the field, the course of it more profoundly paralleling the movement of the century, twin streams to meet at last in 1976, the first year of the last quarter of the century of machinery and print. *Charles Beaumont.*

And their children are within the covenant. Rogue Moon and the Death Machine. "The Man Who Lost the Sea," only the second science fiction story (the first was Judith Merrill's "Dead-Center") to reach the *Best American Short Stories*. Sturgeon of course. A new editor at *Galaxy*, another at *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, that latter the author of "The Golem," "Or All the Seas with Oysters," "No Fire Burns": Avram Davidson, the finest short fiction writer of them all. Randall Garrett and Laurence

Janifer and "That Sweet Little Old Lady", in sweet little old *Astounding*. Gordon Dickson and his legends of the parapsychic military locked by power the deeper into the devastated heart. AMAZING fell to the editorship of Cele G. Lalli, a litterateur of all things, dangerous stuff for the field, never more dangerous than for Ziff-Davis in the sixties. Thomas M. Disch and David R. Bunch and Samuel R. Delaney and Roger Zelazny, all children of the covenant. Middle-period Silverberg, "To See the Invisible Man," the beginning of his gift. Harlan Ellison. New sounds from Britain, not from the writers like E.C. Tubb, Arthur Clarke, Eric Frank Russell who had amalgamated themselves into the American magazines from the first but a different kind of Briton now, one who had seen dying Empire and talked of it in certain urgencies, certain poignancies which science fiction could absorb if not yet, perhaps not ever, understand. Brian Aldiss, J.G. Ballard, Michael Moorcock: Ballard the best writer of the decade: Ballard a child of the covenant. James Schmitz and the Telzey series, Schmitz now in his late forties and at the top of his powers, perhaps the best extrapolist in the history of the field with the possible exception of Poul Anderson who took Rip and the River into space. Norman Spinrad. Alexei Panshin. Anne McCaffrey and Kate Wilhelm who wrote stories that could have appeared in *Dubliners*. Christopher Anvil and Jack Wodhams and Lawrence Perkins and Mack Reynolds over in *Astounding*. Ziff-Davis folding AMAZING. Declining sales. Piers Anthony and Sterling Lanier, the Floridians (Joseph Green, too.) AMAZING fell into limbo as Ziff-Davis looked for a buyer.

Sol Cohen who had helped save

Galaxy procured AMAZING, named Joseph Wrosz editor. Hugo Gernsback in his eighties, now received a plaque. Johnson winked and McNamara blushed and Westmoreland marched and the Chiefs of Staff danced and they made us a proper fire and the fire was Vietnam. *Flower of American youth*. Damon Knight revived the Milford Conference and the concept of the original anthology. Bad karma for magazines: *Venture* and *Dimension X* and *Worlds of If* and *Vertex* went right down the tube. But AMAZING held on: James Tiptree Jr. and Gregory Benford and D.C. Compton and Ursula Kroeber LeGuin and George Alec Effinger and Gardner Dozois and Robert Thurston. Silverberg was proving the point now; in novel after story after novel he was the best writer of science fiction in terms of technical mastery who had ever lived, without any qualification at all he was one of the best American writers, perhaps the best. Tet happened but Eugene McCarthy did not anyway. King and Kennedy were murdered. *The Book of Skulls*, nevertheless, lives. Apollo gave us the Moon and we were delighted to have seen it (Willy Ley was not, he died a month before the landing; why?) but what many of us did not understand until much later is that our dream had always been more of the River, of the Horseman, than of the Moon. The Moon had only been the reflected light by which our dream, moth-stricken, had danced. Campbell cared of the Moon and Ben Bova and G. Harry Stine and many, many more of us in our own way but the Moon had little enough to do with what had sped us into this field . . . and this in a way might have been the knowledge by which the field, in 1969, began slowly to become very sick: our reali-

zation that while we thought we had been drafting blueprints it had only been the *unavailability* of the design which had moved us..

Grissom and the others died on board, in fire. Anthony Boucher died. Hugo Gernsback died. Horace Gold moved to California. Harry Harrison, a good writer, became editor of AMAZING, struggled to bring it from a reprint policy, passed on the burden to an interim editor after a few months. The interim editor gave it up in turn and in October 1968 Ted White became the last captain of the Caine. His accomplishment speaks for itself; it needs little explication, no defense. Alfred Bester came back. Robert Heinlein had never left. George Zebrowski, Pamela Sargent, Jack M. Dann, Gordon Eklund, P.G. Wyal, Christopher Priest, Gene Wolfe. Nixon walked in, had a long, long cup of coffee and walked out. Conventions were now running fifty or sixty a year on the continent and attendance in the multiple thousands was not unusual. Harlan Ellison attended many of them. Wrote pretty good too. Watergate. I have no mouth and I must scream.

John Campbell's successor was Ben Bova. Fred Pohl's successor was Ejler Jacobsen was James Patrick Baen. (Palmer and Browne, a long time coming, were a long time gone.) Ed Ferman completed his eighth, ninth, tenth year as editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. *Dangerous Visions*, *Again Dangerous Visions*. Joseph Wolfe Ferman died. James Blish died. Phillip K. Dick was interviewed in *Rolling Stone* as "the best living s-f writer". Could be. Why not? Acceleration, more time, time and the river. 1976, the fifty year issue of AMAZING. We are fifty years old today and what has become of us?

What will become of us?

Their seed shall remain forever and their glory shall not be blotted out: Yea and even if we shall live a hundred years they shall not be forgotten, even those who names I have forgotten, *Mia Culpa, mia maximus* . . . Joe and Jay Haldeman and Mildred Clingerman and Margaret St. Clair and Reginald Bretnor. Jack Vance. Robert S. Richardson, Bill Pronzini, Howard L. Myers, Christopher Youd. Tom Godwin of "The Cold Equations." Eric St. Clair, Hans Santesson *in memoriam*. Jon Stopa, Oliver Saari, Sylvia Jacobs, Charles Dye *in memoriam*. Charles V. de Vet, Charles Fontenay. Brian Stab-leford, James Sallis, Pamela Zoline. Vonda McIntyre and Joanna Russ. *Their glory shall not be blotted out.* And what is their glory?

What is the glory of Hugo's children, the engines of his desire? What has brought us to this particular magazine to make peculiar and solemn convocation, all thousands of us, celebrating that from which even the devices of Apollo have come?

Well, folks: I do not know. Ahem. Once I thought I did but that was a long time ago and if despair does not destroy conviction then chronology alone will. I thought at one time that what these people, that what all of us were trying to do was to find some paradigm of the universe, one which we could encompass in our own time and by this manipulation find immortality but this could be a description of all fiction, all dreams, as true of the mystery as of the rocketship. But I do not now think this is the case.

I thought once that piece by piece in the forties and fifties they were trying to Build A Better World only to find ruin in the sixties and in that

ruin the shadow of the field's own fall but I think that this misses also. *Their light has gone out on all nations: it has not died.* (Ron Goulart, Ken Bulmer, Horace Fyfe, H. Beam Piper *in memorium*.) I do not think that they were in it for the money either because there is very little money in science fiction relative to the effort involved although not as little as what starved out its very best in the decades past. No, none of these answers were quite right.

Now I think it has to do with Rip and the River.

Deep in the darkness of our history lies that river, lies sleeping Rip, sounds the clatter of the horseman over the cobbles of what became devastated New York. Deep in the heart of this strange and tormented country, born of exile, theft, pain and murder still lies the dream, two centuries old now and only another form if *kitsch*. Junk for the Franklin Mints and the bicentennial coins and Little Old New Yorke Candye Barse and yet the dream is not all junk, not all of it . . . if it exists at all it does in science fiction. It may live nowhere else. In their grievous, distracted, foolish way Hugo's children may be the last custodians of Irving's America, the America of our past which lies as well as the only alternative to the mindless and electrical future.

Their bodies are buried in peace but their name liveth forevermore. My own career in the field ends with this essay. Ends with these lines as I write them. In another magazine now on the stands is my farewell essay: of that and my own difficult career nothing here. *Their names liveth forevermore.* Fifty years and forever, yet into darkness, I am one of Hugo's children.

Me too. —BARRY N. MALZBERG

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT:

What Malzberg has written here is less primarily history than the juxtaposition of images for emotional and artistic effect, and as such I think this pièce comes very close to perfection indeed. But some of the images may give a false picture of history to those who read it for that, and with that in mind I offer these postscripts:

AMAZING did not "fail" before it was "sold to Tek." As Sam Moskowitz tells the story it is almost the reverse: the magazine (and Gernsback's parent company, which owned one of the pioneer radio stations in New York City) became the focus of a power struggle which Gernsback himself lost, forcing him to leave AMAZING in early 1929. He immediately formed a new company and launched three new magazines in the science fiction field: *Science Wonder Stories*, *Air Wonder Stories* and *Scientific Detective*, the latter a borderline publication in which the fields of scientific fiction and scientific deduction were merged. A year later, after 12 issues of *Science Wonder* and 11 of *Air Wonder*, the two were merged into *Wonder Stories* with the June, 1930, issue. (The scientific-mystery magazine underwent a name change and subsequently folded.) Before leaving AMAZING, Gernsback started the second sf magazine, AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, following the oneshot AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL. The QUARTERLY lived for a matter of years, perishing in the midst of the Depression.

Likewise, the Clayton *Astounding Stories of Super Science*, whose debut followed that of the Wonder twins by nearly a year, did not itself "fail." Rather, the entire Clayton line of pulp magazines failed, pulling *Astounding* down with it, another victim of the Depression. The Clayton titles

were sold off, some going to newcomer (Ned Pines (who would subsequently buy *Wonder Stories* from Gernsback in 1937, effectively ending Gernsback's participation in sf publishing for more than a decade—until the debut in 1952 of the ill-fated *Science Fiction Plus*), and some to Street & Smith, pioneer publishers of dime novels and pulp magazines. *Astounding* was one of the latter; as *Analog* it is the only fiction magazine to escape Street & Smith's 1949 purge of their pulp magazine line—a line which then still included *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow*.

In 1938 Tek sold AMAZING to Ziff-Davis publications, who hired a young, controversial fan named Ray Palmer to edit the magazine. Palmer knew what Ziff-Davis wanted and produced it: a much more juvenile orientation and better sales. He also launched FANTASTIC ADVENTURES for Z-D in 1939 and in the forties hired William Hamling, then editor of an elaborately produced fanzine, as his assistant. Hamling left Z-D a year or so after Palmer did; at the end of the forties, bought one of Palmer's new magazines, *Imagination*, and used it to build a publishing empire which is now one of the largest in California, although he folded his sf titles fifteen years ago. Palmer himself published *Other Worlds* in the early fifties, but survived on his part-ownership of *Fate*, an occult-oriented non-fiction magazine. He continues to publish magazines devoted to flying saucers (of which he was an early champion) to this day, although their circulation is low and little-known in the sf community.

In 1964 Ziff-Davis decided they'd had enough of fiction magazines; AMAZING and FANTASTIC were all that remained of a one-time pulp
(cont. on page 114)



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WELCOME TO THE MACHINE

The editor was sorting through old boxes one day when he found in one an illustration he had done with Andrew Reiss in 1960—Reiss pencilled, the editor inked—and he decided it deserved a story to go with it. The story which follows is about exploitation and may be considered a thematic companion piece (but not a sequel) to the editor's "What Is Happening to Sarah Anne Lawrence" (Sept., 1975).

TED WHITE

HER NAME was Alphreda Bengel and she was a handsome woman, if less than beautiful.

And therein lay her problem, Rael thought.

He let his fingers play idly with the nipple of her left breast and she moaned with pleasure. It was easy to do this; women were in the end all alike. They all wanted the same thing: to be treated like expensive pets, stroked, petted, fussed over, made love to. Rael was good at that. As a pet himself, he knew what was wanted.

His hand danced a light arabesque between her breasts and down her belly. She writhed sinuously under his touch. So easy, yet so mechanical. It bored him. Her skin looked smooth but felt rough, scaley, under his practiced fingertips. *Bitch! Why don't you have your skin peeled?* But perhaps she had already. It was hard to tell her age, but he suspected she was in the second half of her first century despite the girlish giggle she too often resorted to.

"Rael," she murmured.

"Ummm?"

"You're teasing me."

He smiled at her. "Of course."

She giggled. It made her seem very young. For a moment he felt his own interest stir, but then subside again as his cynicism reasserted itself.

"I want you, Rael," she said, the suggestion of a pout in her voice. "Please?"

He gave her another smile, putting a slightly wicked twist in it. "You're so impatient," he said, making his tone teasing. He kissed her right breast, then moved lower.

"Ahhhh," she sighed. "You're so good, Rael. So good, so good, so good. . ."

The mood of the moment caught him up and he forgot for the time who he was and who she was and they were just man and woman, acting out an ages-old ritual. Her passions mounted, burst into flame, burned brightly, then died into the embers of post-coital satisfaction. He faked his own orgasm, letting his

illustrated by REISS & WHITE

voice rise to a single shout, then collapsing upon her as if spent, timing it to follow closely upon her own and detumescing quickly thereafter. He had done it this way often, and had never been found out.

After she fell asleep he rose from her bed, found his clothes and dressed quickly, throwing his cloak over his faded jumpsuit and pausing only to pick up the envelope she'd tossed casually upon the 'fresher counter earlier. He didn't bother to open it; he knew how much would be inside. He let himself out and found himself almost without transition upon a transport platform, drawing deep shuddering breaths and shaking.

Trains rocked past on the express tracks and Rael watched them impatiently until a local drew to a stop and he stepped into it. The train climbed three levels into the city's megastructure, stopped at two local stations and an express station, then descended into the subsurface levels once more. Rael got off at the next station and headed for Malcome's Easyrest, the discrete entrance to which adjoined the platform.

He pushed through the heavy plastic door and was immediately assailed by thick warm, smokey air, sweet with alcohol and opium, and almost too dimly lit to be seen through.

"Rael, my lad!"

He turned his head in the direction of the voice, recognizing its silky tones and wishing he had not. "Jon," he nodded. The older man rose from a couch in the nearest alcove and plucked impatiently at Rael's cloak.

"Join me, Rael," the man said. "Please."

Rael sighed. No rest for the weary. But he let himself be pulled into an embrace and a kiss. Jon's kisses were



Rais+White

flacid, sloppy; the man's lips were rubbery and wet. His breath stank of smoke. Rael allowed himself to be kissed without enthusiasm, wishing Jon had not been here just now, when he needed a respite.

"My boy, you're tired," the older man said as he settled them upon the couch together. "Heavy night with the girls?"

Rael grunted.

"Anyone I know? No, don't answer that. I shouldn't know. Only makes me jealous. But I know how it is—you're a working man." Jon's inflection was ironic. "Have you anything left for me?"

"Buy me a dinner, Jon," Rael said.

"Surely," the older man assented. He fumbled and found a button on the wall over the couch. He pushed the button.

"Yes?"

"Dinner for two, if you please. My usual for me. And—Rael, what would you like?"

"Anything good on the menu tonight?" Rael asked. "Any real meat?"

"Vat-grown."

Jon mock-shuddered. "Rael, your tastes are so *expensive*."

"I'll have a steak, salad—real potato if you have it."

"How wholesome," Jon commented.

"Anything else?"

"Another bowl for me. Rael, will you have anything to smoke?"

"Heroin. Crystal."

"I forgot—you prefer to snort."

"I like my lungs healthy," was Rael's sullen reply.

"That all?"

"I should hope so," Jon said. He inserted his magnetically coded card into a slot in the wall below the button and a moment later it was returned to him. "Thank you, Sir," the

speaker grill above the button said.

Rael said little as he ate. It was the best food he'd had in days, but he did not acknowledge that fact to Jon. After he'd eaten he broke open the tiny packet of white powder on the tray and inhaled half of it up each nostril with the aid of a thin plastic straw. Warmth flooded his body and he felt himself slip away from the unwelcome attentions of the man beside him. He laughed to himself, not sure whether he was laughing out loud or not, and not caring.

"Will you come to my place now?"

Rael forced his gaze upon the other. "Shure," he said, his lips and tongue thick. "If you'll pay me."

"So crass," Jon said. "Haven't I paid you enough already? I've fed you and gotten you high. What more do you want?"

"More'n you got," Rael said.

"Come along," Jon said, and Rael let him help him to his feet and stumbled out after him.

IT WAS NOT pleasant, but it was not unpleasant. He was too high to care very much, too high to feel the indignity of the older man's demands. He was a pet, and he let himself be used. He knew he would be sore, later, and it did not matter now. For now he was a body, an animal body, and his mind was in another place, unreachable—inviolable.

But later he realized that Jon had cheated him—worse, he had robbed him. Not only had he paid Rael nothing, he had taken the envelope Rael had collected for his earlier night's work. That had more than paid for the dinner to which Jon had "treated" him.

Waking in his own narrow cubicle the next day Rael felt a sense of deep, gnawing frustration. Ripped off again!

What a fool he was!

He considered methods of retribution, allowing his anger to rise in righteousness. Then he laughed at himself. He would do nothing. He could do nothing. He was a pet.

He found a pocketbomb and inhaled the spray of THC. It calmed him, put fuzzy edges on his bitterness, mellowed him out. He laughed again, without rancor, at his own foolishness.

He went out. He took a lift to an upper-level park.

The sun was a pale disk in the daytime haze. A smooth carpet of artificial grass cushioned his steps. A squirrel poked without success at the manmade turf, then turned in supplication to Rael. He had nothing for it. Disappointed, it ran up a stunted tree and chattered at him.

Rael sat upon a plastic bench and contemplated a rat which was working at something under the bench opposite. Few people were about at this time of day. A wealthy woman walked past, flanked by uniformed bodyguards and wearing an oxygen mask. Rael sized her up automatically: thickening body, blank stare: in her second century. When was the last time she'd been serviced? Then he noticed the nearer bodyguard's scowl and grinned back at him. She was being well taken care of.

Pets. We're all pets, he realized. *Each of us.* The thought depressed him. Was this all he had to look forward to, for the rest of his unnatural life? Selling himself to put together the payments that would prolong his life so that he might sell himself yet more?

He was still young. His body was still fresh, despite its hard use. He was lucky, he realized. He'd been born with the right genetic patterns:

smooth, nearly hairless skin that required no depilation; good features; a tall, well-formed body with strong arms and thighs, jutting, rounded buttocks, large and well-proportioned genitals. He had what people wanted. He was fortunate. As a pet, he was in demand.

He stared up at the sun. Its weak light could be looked upon directly, filtered by the thick and everpresent haze. He regarded the luminiscent orb and considered. Then, suddenly galvanized by purpose, he rose from the bench and left the park. The squirrel ran down its tree and scolded him.

IT TOOK HOURS of riding trains and making transfers before he reached the Port Authority sector. The sun, when next he saw it, was a dying red, low in the western sky. The air was a little chill and he drew his cloak more firmly around himself.

He stood upon an open platform, fourteen levels above the surface of the ground. On the side opposite the tracks there was nothing but a railing. He could look out across lower levels to the scarred expanse of concrete that seemed to stretch beyond the hazy horizon.

Tall ugly shapes stood scattered across the flat field, skeletal fingers pointing toward unguessable destinations in the sky: the ships.

Tiny dots scurried about the nearest ships: machines, loading or unloading freight and fuel. Worn lines drew geometric shapes upon the field, delineating the areas in which the ships stood, focussing their landing areas with bullseyes, circumscribing the movements of the machines that serviced the ships. As he watched a bright light appeared in the near distance and began to rise. Long mo-

ments later, after the light had disappeared into the darkening gloom overhead, the distant sound of thunder reached his ears. Nothing else changed. No one else noticed. Here liftoff and landings were commonplace.

Rael turned away from the rail and found the exit, taking a lift down to the lower levels.

Bars and gathering places were little different here than elsewhere. Rael pushed into the first he encountered, Jaime's Spacehome Bar & Lodging. The smell was indistinguishable from that of Malcome's Easyrest: stale air and intoxicants.

He moved to the bar, a cushioned counter with soft seats on swivels arranged before it. It was not crowded, and he took a seat apart from those which were occupied, settling into it and letting his eyes grow accustomed to the murk.

"Yessir," said a woman of indeterminate age on the other side of the bar. "What'll it be?"

Rael looked up, startled. He wasn't used to human service. "You, uh, Jaime?" he asked, feeling his face heat up.

She chuckled. "Hardly. Jaime owns this place. You won't find him here often."

"Oh. Yeah."

"What can I get for you?"

"Uh, something to drink, I guess."

"Sure. What did you have in mind?" She grinned at him.

"Uh, a Slingshot, I guess."

"Doped?"

"Better not."

"Okay." She reached under the counter, did something, and pulled out a glass which she placed before him. "There you are. Gotcher card?"

He fumbled in his purse. "How much in cash?"

"Thirty six."

He pushed the plastic chips across the bar.

"You looking for somebody. . . or something?"

"Spacemen. Do they come in here much?"

"Sure thing. All the time. You got somebody in particular in mind?"

He shrugged. "I want to get off this world."

"That could probably be arranged. You got the credit?"

He shook his head. "I was hoping I could work something out."

"Ship's pet?"

"Something like that." Unaccountably, he felt his face growing hot again. He took a gulp of his drink.

"Well, lessee. You're not a bad-looking stud. Any special talents?"

"Just the usual ones, I guess."

"Commander Gustoffson's got a room here right now. Want me to check with him?"

"Would you? I'd appreciate it a lot."

"That's what you think," she muttered as she turned away, but she went down to the end of the bar and disappeared through a curtained doorway.

She was gone longer than he expected and Rael wondered if he'd made a mistake. It had been an impulsive decision, coming here. He wasn't often given to making decisions; he usually drifted with the flow of events, a swimmer following the tides, always managing to keep his head up but lacking direction and purpose. He felt a thrill of fear, and wondered what he was getting himself into.

When she returned, it was with a thick-bodied, bearded man in tow. Commander Gustoffson was a bear of a man with a twinkle in his eye, and

he smiled at Rael as he slid into the bar chair next to him.

"Well, now, son," he said by way of greeting. "Susan tells me you're looking for a berth aboard ship."

"Uh, yeah, I guess you could say that," Rael mumbled.

"It's not an easy job, what you're talking about," the Commander said. "Interspace is mostly boredom, interspersed with tedium. Time gets heavy on the crew's hands. You'd have your, ah, work cut out for you."

Rael leaned forward suddenly, staring directly into the Commander's eyes. "I want to get out of here. I want to get off this world—go some place where life is worth more'n it is here." He spoke intensely.

"Okay, son. I see your point. You want to work off your passage, in other words."

"It's all I can think of to do." Rael shrugged, hands widespread.

"Well, okay. Why don't you come upstairs with me." The Commander rose from the bar and Rael followed him, the knowledge that he was now expected to audition his skills flooding his system with adrenalin. The anticipation left him half fearful, half aroused.

COMMANDER GUSTOFFSON was a gentle man. His touches were light caresses; Rael found himself being made love to, and responded to it with a flowering of his own capacities for love-making. Not bored, not drugged, not cynical, he found himself becoming involved in the experience as he had rarely ever been. When the Commander turned him over on his stomach and entered him Rael closed his eyes and drew deep shuddering breaths and wondered what was happening to him. And later, when the Commander, spent, rolled them over

onto their sides, he remained cuddled, spoon-fashion, against the man, feeling a lassitude unfamiliar to him, while the Commander's arm circled his chest and the Commander's lips showered tiny kisses upon his neck and shoulders. It was not for a time that he became aware of the wetness on his own thigh and belly and the coverlet of the bed and realized that he had experienced an orgasm of his own—a genuine rarity, for he had long cared little for his own sexual satisfaction and never expected it under circumstances such as these.

Even as he considered the implications of this Rael drifted into sleep, a sleep from which he did not rouse until the bed shifted and the Commander disengaged himself to rise.

Rael rolled over and look at the naked figure of the Commander in the dim light. The man was hairy all over his body; the resemblance to a bear was even more pronounced.

"How. . . did I do?" Rael asked in a dreamy voice.

The Commander smiled at him. "You'll do. Go home and pack your things. Be at Port 82 at oh-seven-hundred hours. The *Crimson King*. Liftoff's at oh-nine-hundred. Oh, give me your full name, for the records."

Rael did so, and dressed with fumbling fingers, his heart hammering in a way he did not recognize. He left on rubber legs, barely aware that the distances and transit times involved gave him only just enough time to get home, gather a few things, and return. He felt a warm glow and rode the trains in a golden haze. He had accomplished far more than he'd expected. He found himself remembering details of the Commander's appearance, reliving aspects of their love-making. Was he falling in love? He had always regarded the notion as

absurd, a luxury available only to those who had the money to pay for their "love." Not him; he'd been too knowing, too street-wise for the games of love. He was one who had fulfilled others' fantasies; he had never entertained fantasies of his own.

Still in a bemused state, Rael thumbed the door to his cubicle and entered—only to stop short.

Floyd was sitting on his narrow bed, regarding him with a wolfish grin. "Hyah, Rael," Floyd said. "Where you been?"

Rael regarded the man, a youth no older than he, without pleasure. "If you're looking for money, you're outta luck," he said, going to the single chest of drawers and pulling it open to rummage for clean clothing.

"Yeah, I'm looking for money," Floyd said, his tone parodying Rael's. "The Benge femme. Remember? I want my cut."

"You're outta luck," Rael muttered. "I got ripped off."

"Oh, *really*, now?"

"Yeah. You know Jon?"

"The one with the scalp transplant?"

"That's the one."

"What about him? He's good for a little ready, ain't he?"

"He should be. He got mine."

"Say again?"

"He ripped me off. Got me high last night, took what I had—the take from the Benge."

Floyd shook his head. "Uh-uh," he said.

"Whadya mean, 'uh-uh'? I'm telling you—that's what happened."

"Rough break, pretty-boy. For *you*. I still want my cut."

"Well, I haven't got it, Floyd. And anyway, I'm leaving. You want my card?" He pulled his credit card from

his purse. "You're welcome to what's left on it."

Floyd knocked it from Rael's hand and it spun under the bed. "Fuck that. I'll take it out in trade."

"What's *that* supposed to mean?" Rael knew Floyd had no more interest in sex for himself than Rael did—or, had.

"I got something lined up for you—for us—anyway. That's what I came here for. I'll just take out for last night while I'm at it."

"Forget it. I told you—I'm leaving. Now."

"What's this leaving shit? Where you leaving for, anyway?"

"Another world."

"Huh?"

"I got a berth on a ship—the *Crimson King*. Liftoff's pretty soon. I'm getting outta this lousy place."

"Dreamer!"

"I mean it!" Rael had thrown his few essentials into a bag, and hefted it.

"Well, cancel it, baby. I got other plans for you."

Rael turned and stared at Floyd. "What're you talking about?"

"I told you already. We got us a performance tonight."

"A—show?"

"You got it."

"You know I don't go for that stuff, Floyd. I never did. They always want all those perversions, 'n stuff."

"Don't you worry about that, honey. It's money—good money. Enough to square your debt with me. Know what I mean?"

Rael looked at Floyd and felt the taste of ashes in his mouth. "I gotta go, Floyd. I gotta leave. Now."

Floyd stood up. He was well-muscled, much stronger than Rael, as both of them knew. He sauntered to the doorway and leaned against it.

"You leave when I say you leave, Rael-boy. Got that? Not one minute sooner. Not one *second* sooner. Know what I mean?"

Rael felt a sensation in his stomach as if he'd been kicked. Panic rose in him and he threw himself at Floyd. "Get outta my way! You can't *do* this to me!"

Floyd thrust out a hand and stopped him, a malicious grin playing his mouth. "You can't walk out on me, Rael. You can't just go off, leaving me holding the bag like that."

"Look," Rael pleaded, "you want your money? Go find Jon. Get it from him, okay?"

"Now, Rael, you know it's not simple like that. You're one of my boys—one of my *best* boys. You think I gonna let you just walk out on me like this? Come on!" Floyd grinned openly at him, then dipped his free hand to the purse at his belt and came up with a pocketbomb, spraying its contents directly in Rael's face.

Rael tried not to breathe, but could not hold his breath; his anxiety made it impossible. He recognized the contents of the pocketbomb from its color: morphine hydrosulfate, a concentrated opiate. Against his will he felt the changes come over him. Floyd seemed to grow smaller, more distant, almost as if viewed through the wrong end of a telescope. He didn't feel Floyd's hand, now gripping the cloth of his jumpsuit at his chest;

twisting the cloth and holding him in place. He felt himself slipping out of Floyd's grip, out of his jumpsuit, out of his cubicle, out of his own life. He retreated to another place in his mind, a place where he had lived best as a child; where the sunshine was strong, the air clear and the sky blue, where there were open fields and singing birds and he could run and play endlessly. . .

"You'll come along now, won't you Rael?" Floyd's voice said echoing in the far distance.

Rael did not feel himself make any response, but Floyd's tiny face bobbed up and down in assent. "That's good, Rael. I knew you would; you're a good boy, aren't you Rael?"

For a fleeting second Rael was back in his cubicle again, the sunny place gone, replaced by kilometers of metal and plastic, interwoven into a great, dreadful, all-encompassing machine, in the bowels of which he was a cockroach eking out his existence. He saw himself with a flash of terrible clarity, doomed to a lifelong existence here, no escape permitted, and he felt a great lonesome longing for something else—was it sunshine, or was it the hug of a loving bear?—but that was unbearable, and he banished it from his mind, banishing with it all insight, all clarity, all hope.

And he obediently followed Floyd into the heart of the machine.

—TED WHITE

Starhiker (cont. from page 75)
table of the universe like a worm under a stone.

He kept climbing down, his thoughts were like feathers in the wind, swirling, touching, falling. He lowered himself into the red roiling mist that came off the swampbogs, and would bring red poison rain. His

head was aching, full of the sun.

Slowly, he was sinking into an ocean where the ground was rust brown and the folk were only schools of fish and swaying kelp.

He could not find any Hrau.

It began to rain.

—JACK DANN

1976 is not only the year in which we celebrate our 50th Anniversary—it is the year in which the United States celebrates its 200th Anniversary. With that in mind, Robert F. Young, whose stories were a regular fixture here fifteen years ago and who returned to our pages a few years ago, contributes a Bicentennial story—

GHUR R'HUT URR

ROBERT F. YOUNG

Illustrated by TONY GLEESON

(Compiled from the files of the Institute of UFO Research, Historical Division.)

EDWARD GIBBON
(Lausanne, Switzerland; June 27th, 1787):—I have presumed to mark the moment of conception (of the *Decline and Fall*); I shall now commemorate the hour of my final deliverance. It was on the day, or rather the night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of Acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters and all Nature was silent—* Poorly acquainted as I am with certain phenomena much commented upon but little extolled by my scientific contemporaries, I do not presume myself qualified to describe the strange object which I presently de-

scribed rising above the eastern horizon and proceeding in a westerly direction across the heavens; but since I was the sole observer I have no recourse save to make the effort. That the object was a large and curious star would have been my initial conjecture had it not been so far below the celestial plane and had it not been traveling at a clearly perceptible velocity. I will make no attempt to estimate either its height or its dimensions, other than to state that both were considerably. The branches of the Acacias obscured it as it passed overhead; afterward, I obtained a second long look at it as it receded westward, and it was then that I perceived that in shape it rather remarkably resembled a gigantic inkwell from which all the ink had been drained. For some time after it vanished from view I pondered what it might be, whence it came, and whither it might be bound;

*From *Edward Gibbon: Memories of My Life*, edited by Georges Bonnard, Copyright © 1969 by Funk & Wagnalls. With permission of the publishers.

but my head was too taken up with my deliverance for me to entertain for long such far-flung speculations, and at length my thoughts returned to the realm they had but so recently left. —I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion (the *Decline and Fall*), and that, whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious—*

From his "Notes"; discovered 1995; first published, 1996.

JAMES BOSWELL

Fontainebleau, France; June 27th, 1787: Two and one half years have now passed since his (Samuel Johnson's) burial in Westminster Abbey, and the sense of loss I knew in London during those gray dreary days still lingers in my heart. My purpose in visiting the continent is to trace the footsteps he made during his only tour here, as commemorated in the "paper-book" in which he jotted down his impressions while in the company of his two traveling companions, Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. I have, to date, visited the *École Militaire*, the *Hôtel de Chatlois*, St. Roque's Church, the *Place de Vendôme*, the *palais Royal*, the *Tuilleries*, and the *Palais Bourbon*, and now I have come here to Fontainebleau, the place that he described so succinctly in his "paper-book": *The forest thick with woods, very extensive—Manucci secured us lodgings.—The appearance of the country pleasant.—No hills, few*

**Ibid.*



*streams, only one hedge.—I remember no chapels nor crosses on the road.—Pavement still, and rows of trees. N. Nobody but mean people walk in Paris.**

It is not my intention in penning this Epilogue to add to his concise and pointed descriptions or to dwell at any great length upon the physical properties of my itinerary, but rather to try to reabsorb, by viewing that which he viewed, by touching that which he touched, by hearing that which he heard, and by exposing my nostrils to the scents and fragrances that once touched his, the *Johnsonian aether* that I knew so well during those all-too-short years of my association with him. An Epilogue such as the one I contemplate requires for its life-blood not the concrete but the intangible. There occurred tonight, however, an event of such unusual nature that I fear that I would be doing posterity a disservice were I to refuse to take leave of my avowed purpose long enough to record it. There follows, then, a brief digression, for which, it is to be hoped, his many admirers will forgive me.

Having obtained lodgings near the perimeter of Fontainebleau after arriving on the diligence late this evening, I set out at once that I might drink in some of the bucolic sights and scenes he once drank in. The hour was approaching midnight when I left the last of the outlying houses behind me; the moon was an argent orb, shedding silvery radiance over fields and forests and little ponds; the air was laden with the fragrance of sleeping flowers, and the sky was remarkably clear. I had never before

seen the stars shine quite so bright, and it was their unprecedented splendence, I believe, that caused me to direct more of my attention heavenward than earthward, and it was this temporary tendency that presently brought to my notice a singular astronomickal display which I might otherwise have missed altogether.

The display consisted of a peculiar celestial object which rose suddenly in the eastern sky and began making its way across the heavens in a westerly direction that soon brought it directly over the field in the middle of which I had halted upon first espying it. I had up until that moment half-believed it to be a falling star; but stars do not fall on a horizontal plane; and moreover this one—if star it was—possessed characteristics not in the least consistent with such phenomena. It was not merely a speck of brightness soon to be extinguished from the face of night, but a large and lusty glow that seemed to be gaining rather than diminishing in intensity; moreover, it appeared to be propelled by some mysterious means.

Although it passed between the moon and the earth, it was still far too high in the heavens for me to ascertain its shape with any degree of accuracy; nevertheless, as it passed overhead I received the distinct impression that it was artificial rather than natural, and for a moment I had the uncanny feeling that I was gazing at a much magnified version of the lamp that hangs above the entrance to the *Mitre* tavern, and, during the ensuing several seconds, I had a vivid mental picture of myself and Dr. Johnson crossing the cobbled pavement of a summer's evening and pausing briefly in the street before entering the establishment and taking our usual table by the hearth.

*From Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, edited by C.P. Chadsey, copyright © 1946 by Doubleday & Company, Inc.

The seconds, fleeting though they were, left me dazed, and during the time it required me to recover from my stupor the strange astronomickal object completed its journey across the heavens and disappeared into the dark distances of the west, bound I know not whither, nor for what cause. But I have dwelled too long already upon this singular occurrence and will return at last to the central figure of this Epilogue.

He said to Trianon—

From Boswell's *Johsonian Epilogue*; discovered 1985, first published 1986.

ISHMAEL PLUNKETT

June 27th, 1787; 43' north, 38' west; 10:51 P.M.: Sighted strange star moving across heavens in westerly direction. Appeared to be losing altitude rapidly and may plunge into sea before reaching coast of N.A. If it does not, I fear for well-being of my countrymen, as 'tis like no falling star this ship's master has ever observed before. In general outline it brings to mind a huge harpoon.

Second mate's ~~see com exc~~ Second mate's skin rash is worse. He—

From the log of the *Nantucket*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Philadelphia; June 27th, 1787

Dear Dr. Gurney:

Knowing the keen interest you take in celestial phenomena, I would like to relate to you, while it is still fresh in my memory, an observation which I made this evening while walking home from the State House between the hours of nine and ten P.M. after a long and gruelling session. The moon was newly risen, and so struck was I by the singularly fine texture of its silvery radiance that I look'd eastward whenever I came to a square or other open place that permitt'd, in order

that I might feast my eyes upon the silvery orb itself. It was indeed a splendid sight to behold, but it was not its pockmarked face that presently arrest'd and held my gaze, but yet another celestial body that had risen in the east. I assum'd this second body to be a star at first, but no star ever travell'd at such a high velocity or at such a low altitude, hence I knew my first surmise to be incorrect. Indeed, it seem'd that I had hardly taken three breaths before this strange object left the moon behind and climb'd to zenith, trailing blue fire in much the same manner that a kite trails its tail.

As I continued to stare skyward, oblivious to the occasional passers-by, not one of whom was aware of the drama being enact'd in the heavens overhead, I gradually realiz'd that the tail was affix'd to a similarly analogous object, and that the two phenomena compos'd a gigantic kite that had broken free from its mooring and been borne aloft by earthly winds into the aether, there to be driven by winds of a nature mortal men such as ourselves can only guess at. But from what far land did it come? Who on earth could have built and sent it aloft?

These are questions which perhaps you can answer. Before leaving you with them, however, I would like to add two more details. The object, during the time I observ'd it, lost considerable altitude and veered from a westerly to a southwesterly course. This leads me to believe that, not long after I observ'd it, it landed or crashed in the mountains far to the southwest. But this is pure conjecture, and moreover it is quite possible that the long day I endured at the State House and my failure to establish accord among the various factions engag'd in the framing of a workable constitution wearied me to a point

GHUR R'HUT URR

where my perceptions were adversely affected.

Most sincerely & truly yours,

B. Franklin

—A previously unpublished letter that Franklin penned to his friend Dr. Gurney and apparently never posted.

DAVEY CROCKETT

What his pappy told him when he was 8 years old, as writ down with his own hand:

Davey, his pappy said to him one day, someday when you get growed up you're going to meet up with a b'ar and you're going to have to fight it. So you listen now to yore pappy, about how he fought a b'ar when you was only 1 year old, and scared the critter so bad he ran away and took his den with him.

I remember well, though I didn't know it at the time, 'twas the day afore they signed the federal constitution in Philadelphia*. You'un was but a wee scalawag in yore maw's arms, but 'twouldn't be long afore you'd need deerskins to put on yore back and I warn't about to see you go without. So up into the hills I went that day, a-carrying my shooting iron and a-hunting deer.

'Twarn't long afore I came to the Chiltenuokee Ridge, and I climbed it and went down t'other side, but I didn't see no danged deer, I didn't see even a rabbit. And then I come to this here clearing in the woods, a great big one, 'twas, and there in the middle of it stood this big tall tree. Say, it was the danged tree I ever set eyes on in all my born days. Tall and straight, 'twas, with nary a branch on it, and with real shiny bark—sort of silver, like the way the crick gets when the moon shines. And some-

thing high up in it kept going hmmmmmm, hmmmmmm, hmmmmmm, like a nest of yaller jackets, only different.

Well, I walked farther into the clearing to get a better look, and I saw then what a really whopping big tree 'twas. Five men a-holding hands couldn't have reached around the trunk, and it had these three great big roots a-sort of sprouting out the sides and curving down to the ground, which made it seem bigger yet. And just above the ground there was a big square hole in the side that a growed man could of walked into without bending his head. I had a hunch right then and there that the whole danged tree was hollow, and I was just about to go over to it and find out when out of this hole comes the danged b'ar I ever seed in all my born days, *a-walking on its two hind legs!*

But it warn't just its walking like a man that throwed me. It was the clothes it had on too. That's right—clothes. Not ordinary kind of clothes like us civilized folk wear, but shiny things sort of like the armor them knights used to gallivant around in, only not anywheres near as much of it. Just pieces here and there—on the shoulders, around the hips, and on the feet, and a piece like an upside-down bowl on top of the head. And that b'ar warn't the least bit afraid either, mind you, like some b'ars are sometimes. Walked toward me just as big as you please, a-growling to beat the band. "Grrrr-rutt-urrrr!" it went, a-pounding its barrel chest. "Grrrr-rutt-urrrr!" Over and over. Craziest danged growl I ever heard come out of a b'ar's mouth in all my born days.

I had my shooting iron all primed and ready, and on the fourth "Grrrr-rutt-urrrr!" I let go full blast at that b'ar's chest. But the ball hit on the

*September 16, 1787

shoulder where one of them pieces of armor was and glanced off, and I thought I was a goner for sure. I warn't, though. D'you know what that danged cowardly b'ar did, Davey?—it gawped at me for a second as if it just couldn't believe I'd do such a terrible thing as try t'kill it, then it turned tail and ran back into its den and closed the door.

That's right—closed the door. Bet you never heard of a b'ar's den afore that had a door on it, but this one did. And such a door you never did see in all yore born days. It looked like the rest of the tree so much you could hardly see where 'twas. And no power on earth, 'cept maybe a lightning bolt, could've opened it. I know, cause after I primed my shooting iron again I tried. But 'twarn't no use. That door was closed solid.

Well, I come back home, knowing 'twarn't no use t'hang around any longer, and next morning I come back, intending to hide in the woods till the b'ar opened that danged door himself and then let him have it right between the eyes. But—and here's the craziest part of the whole story, Davey—when I got there, *that danged tree was gone, and the b'ar with it!* And right were it'd been, looked like somebody'd built a big bonfire and let it burn right down into the ground.

And that was what his pappy told him when Davey Crockett was 8 years old, as writ down with his own hand.

From the 1836 *Davey Crockett Almanac*, brought to light in 1991 by, and a part of the collection of, the famous Davey Crockettite, Jason W. Wheeling.

GHUR R'HUT URR

DATE (Theirs): September 17, 1787

DATE (Ours): The 7th Ra of the 3rd

GHUR R'HUT URR

Ruhen: XX:P

TO: His Eminence, Harut Ul Farr
Overseer, Out-planet Historical Department
Glandis 6

FROM: Ghur R'hut Urr
Peripatetic Research Engineer 8B
Ionosphere, Planet X-YB-4K

VIA: Red-band Yellow.

This humble subject of his Eminence, Harut Ul Farr, proceeded as directed to the sector of Planet X-YB-4K where the transscopes indicated an Event of Considerable Magnitude to be taking place. He landed, also as directed, in a secluded area well within 800 setads of the ECM site, and activated the ship's trans-tapes. Indecision and discord on the part of the participants of the ECM delayed its completion until a short while ago. Otherwise, mission uneventful, save for one encounter with a ferocious indigene that nearly cost this subject his life, and a number of probable sightings, all of which were undoubtedly personalized and promptly forgotten.

This subject will forthwith depart for his next assignment area. Meanwhile, the transcribed text of the document constituting the ECM follows:

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

ARTICLE I . . .

Included among the Glandis 6 documents presented to Earth during the first Earth-Glandis 6 cultural exchange.

—ROBERT F. YOUNG

MILK INTO BRANDY

LIL & KRIS NEVILLE

Twenty-five years ago Kriss Neville was best known for well-characterized action-adventure stories of the "space-opera" mold. In more recent years, in collaboration with his wife, Lil, he has become better-known for his careful word-portraits and evocations of mood and scene. Herewith, one such: an evocation of age and times long past in a bright tomorrow . . .

Illustrated by CATHI PARKER

SOUNDS of the external world brought Raul into contact with nerve endings. He groaned softly and rolled over, experiencing the familiar multiple aches and stiffnesses. As soon as he got a little broth in his stomach, though, the hangover, at least, would fade away. He had restrained himself at the last, dim minute, pouring no more brandy last night.

He remained motionless, listening to the distant clip-clop of horses' hooves on the pavement. The milk wagon was coming. The sound through the open window on the spring air was easily identifiable.

A bird sang. He opened his eyes and turned his head to the window. The sky beyond was rose, and the bird song was like the audible cracking of darkness, like the breaking of an ice flow in summer.

He thought of a world without birds and was thankful that winter had passed. Nothing can ever duplicate the falling away of winter and the deliciousness of spring air and the lovely songs of the birds. It was another one gone.

Far away, the lonesome moan of a passenger train, screaming on time toward Wynn Crossing at 800 miles a

day, speeding from east to west, following the path of the sun, tying up the two coasts of America, stitching together the continent.

. . . And Raul imagined being aboard this early morning limited, awakening to hear the click of the wheels on the rails, arising to be greeted by the conductor passing through, smiling, checking the ticket stubs of new passengers . . . and then moving into the dining car and the field of snowy linen and sparkling silver and transparent crystal and fragile blue china and the massive gold menu listing native game and innumerable other delicacies. And the service there, at this moveable feast, was such as to extend the meal seemingly forever, as though time were permanently arrested by the command of silent waiters anticipating each request and served out with endless black and bitter coffee, as much as you wanted.

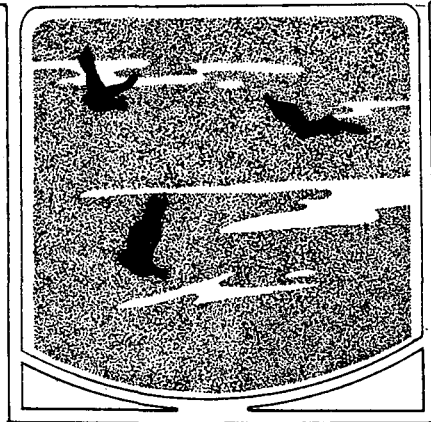
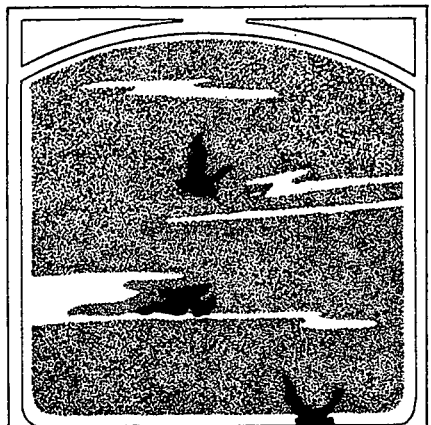
And then at the end of this day orchestrated to the sound of the wheels clicking along the rails, lying in the bed at night, rocking gently, watching the great expanse of forest and fields and the moonlight through the clear and clean air, and feeling the cool

sheets and remembering the smiles on the faces of new-made friends; united in the companionship of the journey as though for a lifetime, and the changed sound of the train as it echoed hollowly over a long, shiny bridge, over a rushing water, clear as glass, like a mirror in the moonlight, and falling away from memory to sleep with the thought of trout and bass and catfish and perch waiting in the huge, rolling kitchen, fresh for his selection, prepared by the chef with skill and love to his expressed desire—this from the clear mirror stream: breakfast waiting for him when the cry of the train on the morning air awoke him once again to sharp hunger . . .

These thoughts and images came before the sound of the passenger train died away, and Raul stirred and rose and made his careful, seemingly endless morning toilet, wanting more than anything else now a drink to quiet his stomach until the desire grew in him to cover everything else and bury other thoughts. Oh, my God, how he wanted a drink!

And then the hunger returned, and he thought of Martha, who was sleeping in this week, wasn't she?—it was her turn—and he realized now that his movements had been unnecessarily stealthy merely to avoid waking her. Let her sleep.

Dressed at last, he made his way down to the kitchen. Clear broth and an egg on toast. Every breakfast, for a long time, had been clear broth and the egg, and it was strange that he had never grown tired of it. Perhaps because the taste of a fresh egg, with moist yellow and white like gelatin, is too subtle to be remembered and thus is always new, and so Raul never tired of it. The broth, of course, was for his stomach, to soothe it of its



hangover.

Starting the meal, he thought, Another egg for Martha? But no, he decided. She would want something more substantial.

The first touch of heat brought movement in the liquid broth, raising currents. In this tiny pan there was reflected the vast atmospheric forces of heat and cold that moved fantastically large masses of air, brought winds and rain and snow and clouds and now bright and luminous clarity . . . that stirred, also, the ocean currents and in the end, too, determined the limits of the land's encroachment upon the sea.

His nostrils found the very delicate first release of savory odor from the broth, and this brought his thoughts back from such observations to hunger and the egg. He would need salt for the egg this morning, in spite of the fact he should eliminate salt entirely, as the doctor said, but today Martha was not yet here and who was there to stop him?

He turned from the stove, the timer showing over 60 seconds, and went for the salt shaker. Before the open window, he paused.

From the forest beyond the house, he heard faintly along with the chatter of squirrels and bird songs, the sound of music: sometime with a radio out there, this early. Probably louder than it seemed, nearer. Maybe it belonged to the girl from the house across the little brook down there, out in the maples, where there was as yet hardly sunlight, but darkness instead, and all the soft, moist, night-time smells of growing things.

... He imagined her there alone on the new grass, sweet and tender, perhaps having risen from a restless bed to wait for a sunrise lover, there in the spring dawn, the beginning

day, with the sound of this symphony surrounding her like magic and converting the stand of maples into a cathedral where young love is worshipped. A time Raul, too, could remember—although for him it would never come again except in that memory: locked there to be handled whenever it pleased him, more real sometimes than reality, more sweet than truth.

This little forest between houses, this recreation of the environment of the very childhood of man, was filled now with music originating from long ago, resurrected electronically and cast out to trouble a little spectrum of crystal air and to launch outward at the horizon toward the moon and stars, growing fainter and fainter, finally to be lost forever beyond recovery in the static of the universe.

Suddenly curious as to why he was standing in the middle of the kitchen floor, Raul turned from the window back to the timer. Still forty-five seconds to go. Frowning, he moved toward the stove.

The aroma was stronger now. He watched clear liquid seethe in the pan and heard it sizzle at the periphery of metal and air. His mouth watered, tasting it, and his stomach arranged itself in preparation to receive it. He would drink it hot, too hot but for sips, and it would fall away within him, and the heat would soothe away last night's indulgence and that would soon be forgotten forever. Ah!

And so he stood, lost in thought, and at length, the egg was ready, spread across the golden toast, rich with golden butter from the cream of cows, and he carried that, with a cup of broth, to the table and sat down in front of it.

He tasted the broth with the spoon and blew to cool it more, sipping

from the spoon, savoring it. While he did this, he looked at the newspaper from the printer, automatically delivered before him. It contained three-dimensional color pictures so lifelike that, if they were larger, it would be impossible to believe that he could not walk into them and become lost, as though into an endless forest, such as those great, central forests of the north and northwest . . .

SUCCESS ASSURED FOR PASSENGER PIGEONS

Headlines large enough to read. He thought of passenger pigeons, like passenger trains, lost before the time of his great, great grandfather, really. From what Martha or Edy had read him once, he knew that in the not too far distant tomorrow, spring and fall, the sky would blacken with the passenger pigeons recovered from time by incomprehensible genetic manipulations and that future air would resound to the flurry of their wings as it was in the days of the Indians and the buffalo.

He was thankful, once more, that man had managed in the end to save birds. The issue had been in doubt within his own lifetime, when they were almost lost entirely, completely, everywhere, forever, from the whole planet, and even its most remote recesses. But in the end they survived the insecticides and all the other poisons, and now it was as if mankind were turning evolution back, shocked by the hopeless vision of a rapacious, synthetic, and sterile tomorrow, and was retreating into its own past, into the past of the world as history, recreating even the passenger pigeons. Somehow this morning he was obsessed with the thought of the death and rebirth of birds.

Egg and broth consumed, he re-

mained at the table, the desire for a cigar just short of unendurable. It was always thus after breakfast, but long experience taught that it would subside and vanish for a while within a few minutes after the meal.

Martha, smiling, came from her own room and scolded him playfully for not calling her. He scarcely listened as she talked, knowing the substance of her thoughts, or rather, her chatter, for it was likely her thoughts were elsewhere than with her tongue. She bustled at the stove, preparing her own breakfast.

"It looks a pleasant day outside," she said at length.

Raul nodded, thinking that he should get up now and go out, for the beginning of warmth, the change toward the promise of midday heat from the night's coolness, was a time he most enjoyed when the weather was fine. Still, there was a heaviness upon him, perhaps from the meal itself. "Ah, ah," he said.

"Feeling all right?" she asked with concern.

"Eh? Yes, yes," he said. "I'll go out; I'll sit awhile out on the lawn. The robins are here. I counted three, I think it was three yesterday."

Outside, he went slowly to the lawn chair and seated himself, ever conscious of the subtle aches and the stiffness of his joints. Overhead, the sky was blue and distant. Sunlight fell without intervention. Morning shadows lay like living things upon the carefully tended lawn.

From the pillowed chair, he looked outward, across the slight roll of land, falling away to the quiet brook, invisible and unheard, which separated his property from the new-leaved maple trees. The half-circle of vision showed only the growth of green things: beyond which, isolated in their indi-

vidual wildernesses if not by distance, lay other homes such as his own. Here he was in a unique and undistracted correspondence with nature, each sending messages to the other: yet just beyond the trees . . .

What was it Martha had said earlier that he should remember about a reporter coming and why would that be? Why would anyone be coming to see him today?

Ah! Yes, of course! Today was his birthday. That's what Martha had reminded him of, and come to think of it, it was strange that he had forgotten that . . .

A tiny rite of passage, another landmark, and what do we really have for rites of passage nowadays but the slow fall of birthdays, and in the end, for those like me, the ceremony of the reporter? Perhaps in some distant future that might as well be the past, we will recover these as well, and the time when the child enters into manhood will be one of hope and terror: and that proving, at least, might be desirable.

Well, one learned to live after a time from day to day, one to the other, thinking thoughts, awaiting that larger rite, perhaps, although it was unimportant in the face of the new breeze and the sound of leaves and the distant and indistinct sound of something living to some unknown purpose . . . on days like this, at least, that larger rite was always too distant in time for concern.

He observed the movement of new leaves and he heard all the sounds there were for his ears to hear and he thought about many things, sometimes forgetting and thinking the same thing twice within the space of a few minutes, each time with enjoyment.

Ah! How long the day would be, and how long to nightfall, when he

would get the drink and the cigar. Damn! That was a long, long time away, an almost eternity away. Tomorrow breakfast, certainly, was forever. There were just these present moments, and time was some fragile, beating heart that you could almost feel inside the skin of your palms, beating, beating, beating, just as long as you never squeezed too tightly.

Henry Adams, a writer, once wrote somewhere: "One needs only to be old enough to be as young as one will . . ." And Henry Adams was right; each day can become a new experience because of forgetfulness. He chuckled to himself.

He noticed the first robins of spring were back. He saw two of them. Robin red breasts. The first two robin red breasts of spring. And hadn't he heard somewhere that the geneticists were actually breeding back the passenger pigeons?

This spring reverie was interrupted by a crackling sound and a roar and a whine and a thunder clap that turned his ancient, faded eyes skyward and sent his thoughts from the present space outward and from the present time both backward and forward, as he embraced that other world beyond all the careful forests of this world, where adventurers hurled themselves in metal bullets at the sky to walk the alien sands of Mars and plunge further outward. And for what reason? he asked.

They should do something about that noise, he thought in flickering, fading annoyance. Ah, that's the penalty for living here. Not like in the fastness of the Rocky Mountains; but air so high is now too thin for old lungs, the winters too long for arthritic joints, and the isolation . . . and the massive extent of nature restored, challenging but forever beyond intimate inspection.

tion now. Ah, this is better anyway, and here comes a young woman up the walk, and she must be wanting to see Martha about something.

"Hello," she said. "Mr. Lopez, I'm Betty Mably from the paper; you remember me. We arranged an appointment yesterday."

"Oh, of course," said Raul. "I remember that. Of course I do."

They chatted for a while, and Martha came and served the young woman coffee and a little cake, and he had just a sip of hot tea and did not think of his cigar or brandy for a long time. After the reporter left, he went in for his noon-time nap. He wished the physicians could do something about the tiredness, but thinking of the millions of hours they'd spent on research to keep aged senses alert, he felt ungrateful and brushed at a tear, unbidden. He fell deep asleep listening in imagination to distant music from the radio in a maple glade, where a young girl waited for her dawn lover.

After a quiet afternoon that unfolded ancient thoughts one upon the other almost endlessly in a mixture of satisfaction and sadness, Martha came for him for the evening meal, and as he sat with his food, she read to him from the earlier interview.

"'Seven score today,' is what the headline says." "A hundred and forty years old today and looking at least sixty years younger, our city's eldest citizen is apprehensive about the future. Mr. Raul Lopez, born in the old State of Colorado, in 1981 on the record, says we're looking backward too much instead of forward. Discounting the new Mercury exploration team, he points out that—"

... Listening, Raul nodded to himself. What he heard sounded good to him. Of course, there was a lot he hadn't said, too. But what the young

lady who talked to him yesterday said, she had it right, she was no fool. They've turned back the clock to the good old days, to the good old days that nobody ever had before but that everybody somehow remembers like childhood, and now we're living there, but they don't know where to stop, and they're turning the clock further and further backward, and they don't really see where they're going and they don't really see what they're doing. There's a regression, a sort of evolution in reverse, an implosion of the population, and even time, itself, is running backward, and someday if they keep on going backward like they are, there won't be any trains at all and finally we'll even abandon our horses and dismantle our carriages and there'll be fewer and fewer of us and we won't be able to keep any factories going at all, and then we'll breed back the other animal species that we've destroyed and forgotten, and the reptiles will get larger and larger, and maybe we're going backward trying to seek something . . . like some kind of security that . . . what . . . what?

Ah, that's what the young lady is really saying, and that shows she's pretty smart; for you can't disagree with that and maybe not all of these new kids are quite so bad as you're likely to think.

Ah, it's been a long, hard day, a tiring day, come to think of it, just really exhausting for some reason, and it's hard to sort of keep to the same line of thought for so long.

"When asked his secret for a long and happy life, he answered, 'Brandy and cigars'," Martha concluded.

Thinking, now, there's a smart one! one of them that's going to make it, Raul said, "That reminds me, Martha, I think I'll try one of those good cigars we've been getting, and a little

brandy. Help me relax, help me go to sleep early tonight after such a day!"

A moment later, the bottle of aged brandy was before him; together with the familiar snifter and the fat, black cigar and the clipper and the box of wooden matches. Slowly and carefully he poured out the brandy, his hand trembling with eagerness.

In just a moment, he would have the drink he'd been waiting for all day. He continued to pour, watching the beautiful amber liquid fill toward the 50 cc mark that the doctor had etched for him. There. Then a drop, two drops more, a bit over wouldn't hurt, a tiny half sip, a ghost taste more. Already the odor had surrounded him, as though he had walked into some exotic garden: The odor was heavy and sensuous and luxurious and promising, like a massage, like a hot bath, like every relaxing thing you could imagine. God, it was beautiful just to smell that brandy!

There's a lot of it! he thought. Tonight, I'll avoid that damned hangover tomorrow. I'll just sip half of this. I'll leave at least half there in the glass. I won't drink it all tonight.

He tasted it. It was worth waiting for. There were more tastes in there than there was time to determine; they were gone too fast, so you try again, and they tumble over each other again and again and again . . .

He smacked his lips with satisfaction, and the fumes of the brandy rose within him and he felt all the tenseness slowly leave his body, all the persistent aches fade away to nothingness. He trimmed the end of the cigar with the little clipper, and he lighted the cigar carefully, watching the match flame, and he smelled the aroma of burning tobacco, and he tasted the multi-layered richness of the cigar that took his thoughts to the

fields where it was grown, to the hangars where it was cured, the markets where it was sold, and the shops where it was fashioned with surpassing skill and love into its final form. Behind that, touched at every step by human hands, as was the brandy, stood this great and incomprehensible technology, refining all the skills and arts involved in manufacturing processes to perfection, itself.

Ah! he thought, sipping again of the brandy. Ah, what a great thing this is that these things which are strong and masterful are available to assault old taste buds, old nerve endings, networks no matter how augmented deadened to many of the subtle vibrations once loved. Brandy strikes upon them with the power of a Hercules. It makes old bodies ring like great, golden bells, shivering them with delight.

He chuckled to himself at his secret knowledge and the deceit he was practicing upon them. Brandy and cigars are for men; milk and candy is for children.

And for a moment, in the garden of these delights, he closed his eyes and forgot about his concern for the world and the reversal of evolution which he foresaw in the future and how important it was to warn them against this, and was content merely to exist alone in the present time, as if, in fact, there were no one in this great, oceanic universe surrounding him but himself.

He opened his eyes. The brandy was almost gone; he had smoked one quarter of the cigar. Any more of either and he would have a hangover in the morning.

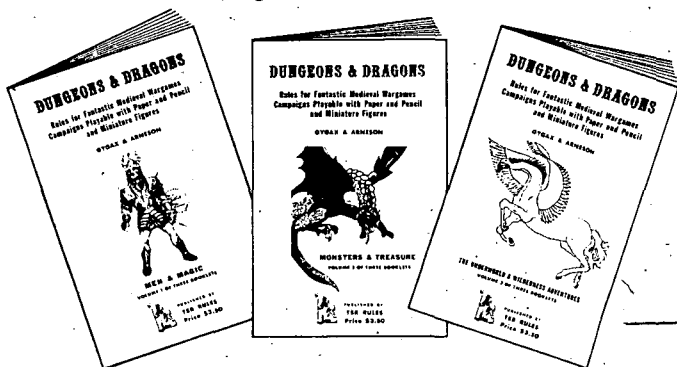
What the hell! he thought. You only live once!

He drank the last drops of the brandy and inhaled once more the cigar, feeling the two drugs weighting

(cont. on page 119)

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THE AMAZING INTERVIEW:

ALFRED BESTER

Conducted by DARRELL SCHWEITZER

Darrell Schweitzer (who?)

Note: The essay referred to here is "Science Fiction And The Renaissance Man," published in Basil Davinport's The Science Fiction Novel, Advent Press.

AMAZING: You state here [in the essay] that the purpose of art is to entertain and/or move its audience, and that science fiction can entertain but not move. Why is this?

BESTER: Because most SF writers don't know enough about people to write real people with real problems, and you can't move a reader unless you write about real people with real problems. Alas, I'm sorry to knock my colleagues in the profession, but most SF writers know very little about life and very little about people, and therefore the reader finds it difficult to be moved by them. This is why SF calls to itself people who are mostly science oriented rather than drama oriented. If there were more drama, more reality of human nature in SF, it would be drawing an even wider audience than it does now. As it is it mostly draws people who are just curious about science.

AMAZING: Is this a limitation of the form or the people who write it?

BESTER: No, no, it's a limitation of the writers themselves. What I say about science fiction is also true of television, women's magazines, skin magazines, everything. The difficulty we have in the United States is that most writers—not all, but most writers—have not grown up. We're

not adults, and that is the difficulty we have. I think for every American novel you read that you enjoy, that's real, there are at least fifty that you read a chapter of and then throw it down and say, "Whoever this is doesn't know what the hell he or she is talking about. These people aren't real. I'm not interested." Now this goes for SF and it goes for all forms of writing. Since we're discussing SF I'll limit it to SF, but I really don't limit it in my mind to any particular form or medium.

AMAZING: Why are there so many overgrown adolescents writing SF?

BESTER: Because this country is an adolescent country; our culture is an adolescent culture. Here's an example. In *TV Guide* a couple of leading TV scriptwriters were beefing like crazy that TV didn't permit them to do "serious writing," which is preposterous. I know all the guys. I know what they're doing now—they're doing the same thing that we all did thirty years ago—but your average American writer gets so *serious* about writing. It means to the average American, who is rather adolescent, something which is serious must be profound, meaningful, heavy, weighty, and this is a result of a lack of maturity. There's no such thing as a sophisticated child, and yet we seem to be sophisticated children. Ken Tynan put it best when he spoke of Americans as being sophisticated illiterates. That's what we are, as writers and as readers.

AMAZING: Why are we sophisticated illiterates?

BESTER: We're sophisticated because of the media. We're very hip about everything that's going on. Why are we illiterates? Because I don't think many of us have received a decent education, and I think that if we have it hasn't stuck with us, point one. Point two, I don't think the average American has had much experience in life, genuine experience. We have been very sheltered. It's only in the past generation that the young people have—*Thank God!*—been pointing out to the adults "You don't know what it's all about." I have believed for a long time—it's very cynical—that this country is not going to grow up until we lose a war, until we get licked and then occupied. Then we'll grow up, but not until then. So far we've been—well they tell that old gag about the couple of guys from Boston who were on a train from New York to Boston and one of them says to the other, "Whatever happened to Jennifer?" "Oh, she's living in New York." "Oh really? What is she doing?" "Oh, I have very bad news about her. She's doing something awful." "What is she doing?" "She's a prostitute." "Oh, thank God!" said the other one. "For a moment I thought you were going to say she's living on capital." We in the States have been living on capital all our lives, which is why Ecology comes along too late and says for God's sake don't destroy this heritage of ours. We have been getting fat and rich destroying our heritage and now we're beginning to wake up just a little with the oil squeeze.

AMAZING: Do think it's possible to—

BESTER: To grow us up? No, as I said before, the only thing that's going to grow us up is for us to get licked in a war, nothing else, because we're fat

and lazy and don't know what the score is. If I were president of the U.S. I would pass a law, the first law I would pass, which would require every American citizen to spend two years living abroad in Europe, China, anywhere, to learn what the score really is.

AMAZING: Do you think we find greater maturity in foreign writings?

BESTER: In foreign writing? Yes, indeed, yes.

AMAZING: Even in foreign SF?

BESTER: Oh I haven't read much foreign SF—I haven't had the opportunity to read much of it, but the little that I've read—is it more mature? In a sense, yes. I've read mostly the French writers, and they seem to have a delicious sense of humor which is of course part of maturity.

[a pause]

Hey—I was going to tell you the story about the elephant that robbed the jewelry store. 47th Street is the big jewelry center in New York and this jeweler comes to his shop—it's a very elegant shop selling precious stones—he comes quite early one morning to get some paperwork done, and he arrives just in time to see a truck back up in front of his store and an elephant gets out of the back of the truck and with its trunk it smashes in the window, and with its trunk it scoops up all the goodies and gets back into the truck and the truck drives off. The guy is absolutely flabbergasted and he calls the cops at once, of course. The police come and they start asking questions. Well what kind of truck was it? It was a rental truck. Did you see the guy who drove it? No, no, I can't give you a description. Well was it an African elephant or an Indian elephant? What do you mean? There's a difference? Yeah, the African elephant has big ears which

stick out wide on both sides of its head, and the Indian elephant has little small ears that stick close to its head. And the guy says, "Ears! Ears! Ears! How could I tell? The elephant wore a stocking over its head."

[laughter]

AMAZING: With some pretense of seriousness, I notice in this essay here, you are talking about the limitations of science fiction as a form. What do you think they are?

BESTER: The limitations of SF? That's a tough question. Let's see. [Pause] I think the main limitation of SF is that it must, ipso facto, be make believe. You enjoy reading make believe stories now and then, but not as a steady diet. I think that's about its only limitation. That and the fact that too many of the writers are rather childish and don't write about human beings. You see, when I write I try very hard, with or without success I don't know, to use science as an excuse to present human beings with new problems, new conflicts, and they try and figure out how they're going to solve them, how they're going to cope with them. Sometimes they do cope; sometimes they fail. But for me science is only the excuse to hit people with novel problems. That's what I try to do. When I read SF I read it with the same thing in mind. I want to read about real people facing the problems of the future or of extrapolation. And I do read stories like that occasionally, but not as often as I would like to. Usually you find that men who are best on extrapolation of science are weakest on character. You find that the people who are best on character don't know enough science to write science fiction.

AMAZING: Then why did you turn to SF when you did? Back in 1939, when

your first story appeared, the field was not exactly producing sublime classics of literature.

BESTER: For a very simple reason, Of course as a boy I fell madly in love with science fiction. I read it constantly. I took a crack at writing because I didn't know what else to do. So what kind of writing to do? The kind of writing I knew best, which would be science fiction. I was not likely to attempt a Dostoyevskian novel or a Tolsteyan novel, or even a Dickensian novel. I knew that I had no capacity for that. SF was small enough, limited enough, and I had studied science. I had taken my degree as a matter of fact in the scientific disciplines here at the University of Pennsylvania. So I knew enough science and I knew enough of the field to take a crack at it. And I was very lucky. I had a funny experience. I was chatting with Robert Heinlein the other day—Oh, the other month it must have been—and I was interviewing him for *Publisher's Weekly*, and I said, "Robert, how did you write your first science fiction story?" And he said, "*Thrilling Wonder* was running a contest for the best story by an amateur and they were offering this fifty dollar prize, so I wrote this story, but it ran 7,000 words, and I heard that a magazine called *Astounding* was paying a cent a word, so I submitted it to *Astounding* first, and they bought it." And I said to him, "Robert, you son of a bitch, I won that contest and you beat me by \$20." And of course winning the contest was purely a fluke. It was only with the help of the editors who showed me how to rewrite the story and make it tolerable—and that's all it was, tolerable—but having sold one story I tried again, and again, and again. And very slowly I began to write SF but

when the big Superman explosion started I shifted over to comic books. They needed writers very badly. And then from comics I switched to radio, from radio to television, and I keep moving on all the time. That's all.

AMAZING: How did you get back to SF?

BESTER: I kept going back all the time because, for example, in script writing very often the networks or clients would not permit me to use an idea that I liked very much. They'd say, "Well you know, it's too novel for the public. They won't understand it." Or else, "Oh, no, it would be too expensive to do. The budget can't stand it." Now, some of these ideas I left in my gimmick book, my commonplace book, but others just bugged me so I had to write them, and since they were kind of off-trail I wrote them as SF which gave me a completely free hand. And so that's how I would go to SF and go away from it and go back to it.

AMAZING: Have you ever had opportunities to do SF in the other media?

BESTER: Oh yes, but I've always turned them down, because the producers of the shows wanted the kind of science fiction that was being written in the 1920's, and I didn't want any part of that. It was too far back for me. Yes, I've gone out to the Coast several times, and each time I would talk to the producers and they'd still be looking for the comic book character—what's his name?

AMAZING: Flash Gordon?

BESTER: Yes, they're still looking for Flash Gordon. So I don't want any part of that. You have to move with the times.

AMAZING: There have been serious attempts to do adult SF on television. They haven't been very successful.

BESTER: No, they haven't been too

successful, and I think I know why. I think they haven't been successful for the same reason that SF films haven't been very successful. Your TV audience and your film audience are relatively inexperienced, so the best you can give them is Flash Gordon. Anything beyond that, anything mature in SF terms, is too much for them.

AMAZING: Do you think it's possible with this adolescent audience and this even more adolescent industry—

BESTER: Well, no, it's unfair as far as SF goes to call it an adolescent audience. Let's say that it's an inexperienced audience. In SF terms an unsophisticated audience, so you have to give them the simplistic kind of SF.

AMAZING: Is it possible to do anything better?

BESTER: Certainly, and as soon as you educate your audience you give them better and better. Sure, but it'll take time.

AMAZING: It is generally agreed that there is no work of SF right now which could be considered among the greatest works of human literature. Do you think we'll ever get such a work?

BESTER: You know, it all depends on your definition of the greatest work of literature. That's a tough one, really. You take a novel, for example, like Reade's *The Cloister & The Hearth*. That's high style, almost picaresque writing—well, it's high adventure. Theoretically this would be the equivalent of a science fiction novel. Have there been SF novels equivalent to that? What's my answer? No. Why not? Jesus Christ that's a rough question to answer. How about *Mary Poppins*, which is surely a classic? Certainly it's not SF but it's fantasy and delicious fantasy too. So there have been fantasies which have been classics. *The Wind In The Willows* for

example. There's a great classic for you, a beast fable. *The Wind In The Willows* is marvellous. Have there been SF classics? How about *The War of the Worlds*? That's a magnificent novel, really magnificent. That's great literature. So SF can achieve it.

AMAZING: Something Robert Silverberg brought up in an earlier interview was that SF has yet to produce its Shakespeare.

BESTER: Well so has literature. [Laughs] After Shakespeare, what? That s.o.b., he's the death of every writer. He's so great that you're always writing against him and always losing. But we produced one Shakespeare, period, so to ask for another is asking too much. Why not say has SF yet to produce its Dickens or its Reade or its Nancy Mitford? I don't know. How about Lewis Carroll? SF has yet to produce its Lewis Carroll. I think that is a fair comparison. These kinds of talents only show up once every four or five generations. We have to be patient in between, that's all. Someone will come along in SF. For all we know some novel which we take for granted, we may discover if we live long enough, that in time it will become a great classic of literature. *The Space Merchants*, which I think is one of the best SF novels ever written, may very well turn out to be a classic.

AMAZING: Do you think this great novel will be recognised?

BESTER: No, of course not.

AMAZING: Later?

BESTER: Later, surely. It'll be recognised later, and it'll be a great surprise to us to find out, "What? That thing's a classic? It was just another book I read, that's all."

AMAZING: Do you see anybody in the field right now with classic potential?

BESTER: Oh, man, that's a tough one.

You must understand, I am not knocking any writer—I absolutely refuse to do that—but the writers that I praise, that appeal to me the most, may not necessarily appeal to the world. For example, Theodore Sturgeon. I have always adored everything that Sturgeon has ever written. And if anyone is capable of producing an all time classic it is certainly Ted. Who else? Well you know I am a great, *great* admirer of Cyril Korbuth's and a great admirer of Henry Kuttner. Kuttner I thought was like God, and alas, alas, alas, Kuttner died, but some of his stories are great classics. Do you remember the one called "Vintage Season"? He wrote it under the name of O'Donnell. Gee, that was a great story. He had the master touch. Why am I still alive and why is he dead? It should be the other way around, because he really had it.

AMAZING: In this essay [In *The SF Novel*] you mention that the appeal of SF is basically that of "arrest fiction"—meaning it's something that grabs ahold of someone—

BESTER: Oh yes, sure. Again I'll quote Robert Heinlein. He said, "Look what I do. I grab you off the street, grab you by the lapels—I never let go—and I shake you." Well that's arrest fiction. That's what he does. I do it a different way. I shoot bullets past their heads. But it's the same damn thing. I mean you shake them up and knock 'em as silly as you can, hopefully entertaining them while you're doing it.

AMAZING: How do you design a story to shake the reader?

BESTER: Well first I have to shake myself. One example. Ben Bova had exactly the same reaction. In this novel that *Analog* ran [*The Indian Giver*—November, 1974—January,

1975] there came a point at which it suddenly dawned on me that I would have to kill off my favorite character, a lady. And it just came on me, slowly but surely, Alfie you gotta kill her. The cast of characters and the balance of the story require it. It's absolutely necessary. Well I couldn't write for a week. I just couldn't bring myself to write the death scene, because I loved her so much and she was such a part of me. And finally I got up the guts, and I killed her. And then I went into complete shock and couldn't write for a week after that. She was dead. My baby was dead. And I was delighted when Ben got the manuscript and read it and said, "Alfie when you killed off so and so I was in complete shock. It killed me that you killed her." I said, "Yeah, it hit me the same way." I have to surprise myself and astonish myself and shake myself up. And if I can do it to myself hopefully it will have the same effect on the reader.

AMAZING: Do you consciously use stylistic tricks to achieve this, such as the unusual typography in *The Stars My Destination*?

BESTER: No, that's not done for the purpose of shaking them up. It's done because of the attempt on my part to create an entire milieu, to build up an entire civilisation. And I find that I must in order to do that use visual as well as literary imagery. It's not done just for the sake of a trick. It's done because it will add some color to the particular milieu in which the story is taking place. That's all.

AMAZING: Did you have a lot of trouble with the typesetters and proof-readers on that and on *The Demolished Man*?

BESTER: No, not really. No trouble at all. My editors understood what was being done and monitored the pro-

duction of the books very carefully. Where I've had the most difficulty and still do is where I deliberately use bad grammar. You'll always find a copy checker who's going to clean up your grammar. You know, they did that to Ring Lardner once. It's a classic story about copy checkers and editors. Ring Lardner was of course famous for writing stories from the standpoint of a narrator who as often as not was a dumb ballplayer or something, who used miserable grammar, and one publishing house published one of his stories and they cleaned up all the grammar, which of course destroyed the story. They had missed the entire point. Now the same thing happened to me when I quoted a line of Ring Lardner's "Writeing is a nag." Of course "writing" is misspelled, and what the character was trying to say was "writing is a knack" and that's the way Ring Lardner wrote it. And that's what I used for a piece I wrote for an English publication and dammit if the copycheckers didn't clean it up and I had to send the copy back and say, "Stet! Stet! Stet! Sic! Sic! Sic!" This is the way it is. I have this trouble all the time. As a matter of fact Dianna King at *Analog* had a hell of a problem with "The Indian Giver" because some of my misspellings were deliberate and some were accidents. And she had to figure out whether it was deliberate or stupidity.

AMAZING: Well we just ran out of questions.

BESTER: Oh that's all right. I'll ask a few questions. What aspect of SF do you think readers are most interested in about writers, the authors of SF?

AMAZING: About the authors? "What kind of person writes this?" The guy who doesn't read SF often will ask where they get those crazy ideas, and the fan is probably a frustrated

would-be writer himself and he'll say, "How do they do it?" And the fan who is not a would-be writer—there are a few occasionally—might wonder what kind of person is this who is producing this.

BESTER: Well in the sense of Does he have a trick or secret that I can learn so I can write it too?

AMAZING: Of course it doesn't work that way.

BESTER: I know it doesn't work that way, but do you think that they might think it works that way?

AMAZING: Oh yes, especially if you talk to non-writers, the ones who have a very exaggerated concept of the value of a story idea. You know, "I've got this great idea for a story—"

BESTER: "I don't have the time, so all you have to do is write it for me."

AMAZING: Yes, the ones who don't realise that stories are people and images and experiences. They think it's just the idea.

BESTER: And as a matter of fact I've always said it's perfectly true, that you can take the identical idea and give it to six different writers and each will write an entirely different story because after all the art is the man and man is the art and you write what you are, you sculpt what you are, you compose what you are. It's unavoidable. And one of the difficulties I had with young writers was trying to explain to them as gently as possible, "Look, write only what you know. You haven't had much experience yet, you're only 21, so don't write about things you don't know about. Just write your experiences. You will eventually, as time passes, grow, experience more, and your horizons as a writer will enlarge. But be content with your limited horizons and try, off duty as it were, to enlarge your horizons. Go out and have ex-

pereinces." I used to tell Jim Blish that all the time. I remember reviewing one of Jim Blish's books and I said, "For God's sake, Jim, will you go out and chase ladies, gamble, rob a bank, do anything. Get experience, because although your science is great your characters are completely unreal."

AMAZING: How important do you think everyday experiences are in writing SF? Won't they give a story a flavor which will badly date it?

BESTER: No, I'm going to use you. Someday I'll use you. I don't know what I'll do with you but I'll use you. I'm a packrat. My wife calls me a cesspool. Nothing goes to waste. I'll use you. I used to know a guy, an Englishman, who was a colleague of mine and we were writing the same TV show together. He was doing the research on it and I was doing the script. He also wrote himself, but he didn't really believe he was creating unless he made it up out of whole cloth. He had to invent everything. And I would say, "For Christ's sake, this character is not real. Will you use somebody you know if you need a character?" No, he had to invent everything. As a result his stories were completely unbelievable.

AMAZING: How then do you account for the imaginary world fantasy, such as *Lord of the Rings* or the James Branch Cabell books?

BESTER: I hate it. Sure, I hate Cabell. When I was a kid I used to enjoy reading him only because of the little sex passages, and you know when you're a kid you like to read sexy stuff, but I hate Cabell. As for the *Ring* cycle, that's unique. Only he had some sensational chapters in the first novel. He had some other chapters which were incredibly dull. But I just prefer to think of the great chap-

ters.

AMAZING: Well, could this be because his invention flagged or perhaps because Tolkein was a dull person?

BESTER: I wish I knew. I didn't know the guy. If I'd interviewed him I would have found out.

AMAZING: What happens when a writer writes himself into a story and no one is interested?

BESTER: He shouldn't write it. He should give up writing and be an honest man and work in Gimbels or something. If you lose it you lose it. There's nothing you can impose on the reader. The reader owes you nothing. You owe everything to the reader, to entertain him. If you've lost it, too bad.

AMAZING: Basically a writer has to be an interesting person to start with?

BESTER: I don't know. Some of the most brilliant writers I've met have been very dull people in real life. Their writing, it so happens, can be fantastic.

AMAZING: Maybe this is because they put everything into their writing and there's nothing left.

BESTER: It could be. It could easily be. I think that's the answer myself but I couldn't swear to it. [Pause] Running out of gas or out of tape?

AMAZING: Both. You exhausted the first line of questioning so quickly—

BESTER: Well let's think up some more questions. Why don't you ask me, "Do you think your stories should have illustrations?" I don't think my stories should have illustrations. I would prefer to think that I draw word pictures for the reader and it's a collaboration between me and the reader, and I can give him the inspiration for a picture and he'll draw his own, and I think illustrations would only get in the way of that.

AMAZING: You were talking earlier

about the use of unusual typography to create visual rather than purely literary images. Couldn't a collaboration help to further this?

BESTER: Oh man, you're right, but it never works that way. Now I talk as an editor. I have never, never been able to communicate with art directors, with artists, with photographers. There are one or two exceptions, but as a rule it's impossible. I think it's because I am very visual in my writing, I am *writing* visually. The art director types are purely visual and for them words are meaningless really, and so for me it has been difficult to communicate with them because all I can use are words. I can sit down and make a sketch or something like that, but for them, professionals, that doesn't work at all. Yes, a collaboration would be wonderful, but you will find that ninety-nine times out of a hundred the art director, the artist, or whoever will just out of hand reject everything you suggest. In point of fact when you write TV scripts one of the things young writers do is write stage directions into their script. Enter left. You know, tight shot here, close up, medium shot. The first thing that your TV producer or director will do is strike out all the stage directions. The director has got his own ideas of how he visualises it. And he won't listen to the writer at all.

AMAZING: Then the writer's story won't get on the screen as his own story, is that it? You may have heard Harlan Ellison talk about when he gets a story filmed sometimes he doesn't recognise it.

BESTER: Yeah, sure, I understand that, but between Harlan and his director, Harlan has lost his clout. He's no longer in control. Once a script is written you're out of control. There's nothing you can do about it. You can't

even cast it. You say to your director you see G.C.Scott as playing this part. He says, "Yeah man, thanks very much," and he casts Robert Cummings or someone like that. You're out of control, and you have to reconcile yourself to it and instead of sitting and beefing about it go and write another script. That's all.

AMAZING: Might this not be what is wrong with Hollywood—why we get so many mediocre films?

BESTER: No, what's wrong with Hollywood is that it's committee work. You know the old joke. What is a camel? A camel is a horse built by a committee. It's the committee work that is destructive. It was Kipling who said all work is one man's work, and that's perfectly true. One man's work. Take Billy Wilder for example. From top to bottom he is in control of his films, from writing through casting, direction, everything else. Which is why his films are great. One man's work.

AMAZING: How does a Hollywood writer beat that?

BESTER: Oh it's very simple. You don't go to Hollywood and you don't write for Hollywood. If I had a nickel

for every offer I turned down I could retire. No, I don't work on the coast because I can't stand the committee work. I have to be in control as much as possible. And since I am no better than my editor or my director the only editors and directors I can work with are those who are intensely sympatico. If they think alike and see alike and hear dialogue the same way, then I can work with them and I know I'm safe.

AMAZING: Would you permit the filming of one of your novels?

BESTER: Oh sure, all the novels have been under option for years. I know they'll never be made but what the hell do I care? I get a check every quarter for them and I stick the check in the bank and go out and buy books or buy booze or buy women. Whatever you can buy with it. They'll never make them. It's alright with me.

AMAZING: But suppose they did.

BESTER: Well I wouldn't go to see it. Why should I?

AMAZING: Thank you Mr. Bester.

—conducted by
DARRELL SCHWEITZER

Down Here In The Dream Quarter (cont. from page 82)

chain, the rest of Z-D's magazines higher-circulation, higher-profit slick non-fiction magazines. They shopped for a buyer, hemmed and hawed while offers and counter-offers were made (an offer came from Mercury Publications, the publisher of *F&SF*, but was not accepted; as an editor for Mercury then, I felt myself within an ace of the editorship of this magazine, was terribly thrilled at the idea and did not for a moment really expect it to happen. It didn't.), and finally accepted Ultimate's offer. The last Ziff-Davis issue of this magazine was dated June, 1965; the first from Ulti-

mate (and now on a bimonthly schedule) was dated August, 1965. Barry is too modest to add that he was the "interim editor" between Harrison and myself; he should not be, for he bought and published a number of new stories (for what was then still largely a reprint magazine) during his stay. He is also too modest in not naming the magazine in which his own farewell to science fiction appears: it is *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and the issue may be on sale as you read this. Look for it. Barry deserves at least that much.

—TW

VERSES FOR A GOLDEN AGE

BARRY N. MALZBERG

(With apologies to Frank Sullivan, the Bard of Saratoga County, New York)

AND NOW we're fifty! call the herald
To sing praises of David Gerrold,
Frederik Pohl and Larry Shaw
And Alfred Van Vogt and Pat Degraw
And Judtih Merrill and Robert Mills
And James Schmitz and Richard Hill

Pour them wine for we find merit
In the collected works of Randall Garrett,
Christopher Anvil, Damon Knight
Phillip Farmer, Theodore White.

To celebrate fifty we come lurchin'
To drink a toast to Theodore Sturgeon
Clifford Simak, Frank B. Long,
Ray Z. Gallun; Bob F. Young

And remembering apollo we strum
the lyre
for Catherine Moore, Vonda McIntyre,
Kate Wilhelm, Anne McCaffrey, all
worthy lasses
And the brothers Phillip and Morton
(Klasses).

A piper's trill for our famous three
Heinlein, Asimov, Ray Bradbury
(Which is not to slight J.G. Ballard or
Disch
Or Brian Aldiss or Silverberg for
whom we wish
Fame equal) Here's to Benjamin Bova
Ed Ferman, Harry Harrison; *Lashana*
Tova,

Phil Dick, Al Bester, Chris Priest our
Pontiff,

Bob Bloch, Bob Thurston, Bob
Sheckley: *Gut Yuntiff!*

Our revels will end the rule of Herod
Thanks to the truths of T.L. Sherred
And those who choose may dance a
courtin'
On Carol Carr, Mildred Clingerman
or Andre Norton.

Gene Wolfe, Poul Anderson, you're
on the level,
And so are you Jim Gunn, Kris
Neville,
Wassail Harlan Ellison, brava Henry
Slesar,
Health to Larry Niven of the stereop-
ticoid laser!

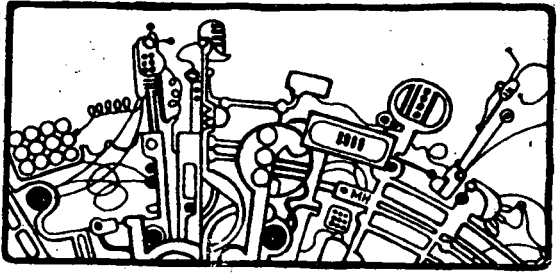
And a slatue to the older and younger
Pierces
Who invariant we wish good cheerses
(Also to Dozois, Russ and George
Alec Effinger,
And John Brunner, Jack Williamson,
James Tiptree our Salinger.)

Fifty years surviving in Hugo's gleam
Stirs the fyfe, hear the Piper (whose
name is H. Beam)
And remember Kuttner, Kornbluth,
Willy Ley,
James Blish, Stanley Wein-
baum . . . they live too on this
day.

What Hugo granted let no more venal
(cont. on page 119)

VERSES FOR A GOLDEN AGE

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THE VIEW FROM TITAN

TO GET TO Carmel and avoid the neon jungles that infest the northern and southern California coasts, you must travel on the sheer coastal route, brave the fogs and curves, you must take Route One. Carmel is an appendix to Monterey, an afterthought of summer cottages and organic food stores. There are a lot of writers and artists there and they are to be seen avoiding work in the afternoons, sipping coffee in the Tuck Box or thumbing paperbacks in the small book store.

To reach his house you turn off Route One in the geometrical center of town, the bisection point, and travel but a block up a dead end street. His house is cloaked in pine and wisps of the fog that pursued you down from Santa Cruz. It glows through the fog; orange splashes signal to you through the windows. You wonder why reading lamps seen through the windows in winter seem to hum with a sun warmth, while in the summer they are just reading lamps in the distance.

His rug muffles your inward step. A cat melts away at your entrance. His wife makes coffee in the wide tiled kitchen. You and he sit in deck chairs. (And in your mind's eye you

flash on being a movie producer, look for your name on the back. But he has been there, you have not; he worked for Disney and Pal.)

There was a portrait of him on the cover of *Fantasy & Science Fiction* in the early 1950s, but you do not remember it until an hour later, finding it in an odd corner of his work room. He has not changed from those days. He is over eighty now and his face carries a weight behind it while still retaining a walnut-brown resemblance to that earlier man. A smile crinkles everything.

CHESLEY BONESTELL was never an illustrator of fiction per se; his works hang in planetaria and museums, primarily, and only through the hustling of agents did they find their way onto the covers of science fiction magazines. But there is something in Bonestell that stands for the vision of science fiction that emerged over the last fifty years: the vast expanses, dappled with light; the abyss that hangs above our thin skin of atmosphere; the sheen of suns on the oily oceans of other worlds.

Here Bonestell shall stand for all the illustrators, the seers, who have illuminated the manuscripts of science

fiction writers. Their contribution is often overlooked. But how often do you remember, not the characters or plot of some book you stumbled upon as a teenager, but rather the painting or black and white interiors, the eye-catching glimpse of other realities, of distant dramas?

You shuffled down the aisles of that dimly remembered school library, coasting among those embalmed boxes of words we call books, rummaging for something to exercise your mind. And there it was: a vision. Inside a world constructed of sentences. But first, before you cracked the book open, that was that enticing vision. That all-important, momentary peephole.

Looking back, perhaps we owe the painters and sketchboard artists more than we may know.

THERE ARE NO astronomicals inside the house. To see them you must go outside, up an exposed staircase, into the study. There they crowd the room. But here in the house, sipping tea in green Japanese mugs that warm the hands, you see the work for which he is not known. Oriental prints. Portraits, belying the common judgment that he cannot render the human figure and make you feel with it. Delicate pencil work. Architecture, stress and design, massive stones balanced in a fine grid of lines. "I see the patterns first, then the rest. I was an architect first, you know, before the first world-war. I designed the ceiling of the San Francisco opera house." After that?

"I travelled. I saw the world. I lived in New York and Paris and London and finally Los Angeles. Designing buildings and then movie work, backdrops, special effects. Disney did a lot of innovation in special

effects, but it required someone who could draw and paint with such detail that the film viewer wouldn't catch an error. Things had to be real. I learned much that way. We were very well paid; that was Los Angeles."

Does he ever read the things he has illustrated? No, he doesn't like science fiction very much. He rarely if ever willingly puts a human artifact into his work, a pencil-shaped space ship or a pressure dome, or a spacesuited figure. He doesn't have any idea of what the future will bring and feels awkward trying to visualize it. But stars and planets, yes, the astronomer friends he has can give him descriptions of how things must be there and he can see it, too, in some closed mind's eye, so that it comes out right. Most science fiction is quickly outdated, anyway. Look at all the fins on space ships, and the cloudless Earths. Better to stay away from it.

Someone in Palo Alto has made prints of two of his oils. One is of an expedition that has landed on a dry, rust-orange Martian desert and is deploying equipment. It seems oddly out of balance and unconvincing, not his best work. The other is better: Saturn from Titan. We didn't come intending to buy anything, but we do anyway, taking the Saturn. There is something awesome in the mass of the planet even at this distance, a cold bone white disk. Looking at it you can believe that planets are gods and men but pawns.

There are stills from motion pictures he has done. George Pal's worlds colliding, rockets, "The Day The Earth Stood Still", a Groucho Marx hanging from a 20th storey window against city lights done in oil, but special effects making the distant car headlights move. Stop-motion.

Planet-wrecking. It was a lot of fun and a lot of money but his reputation will probably rest on the astronomicals displayed in Boston and New York and San Francisco. Double stars and novae and howling unseen storms in deep atmospheres. A sense of the infinite.

At the center is craft. A view of Saturn at dawn from the Grand Tour probe, now the victim of budget cuts: it stands dead upright on the easel, half-finished. "Black is very difficult. It is so hard to get the absolute pure black in comparison with the soft colour of an atmosphere or a star's envelope. Almost impossible, I think, unless one practices a great deal. I have seen very few painters who can handle it, even in abstracts."

He shows us a few abstracts he has done and they are very good, though none uses very much black. He has tried everything and mastered many techniques, though he has sold very little of it. Most of the good oils he keeps for himself; he can afford to. For a while there was a rush to buy his astronomical oils and he nearly become a factory, turning them out faster than he should have, but that is past. Most sold to aerospace engineers and now they have less extra money and perhaps it is just as well. He works hard and keeps a regular schedule but he cannot keep up with the load of work. Today arrived an offer from PLAYBOY which he will accept, for a three page oil, even though it will mean disturbing his schedule. His agent is trying to get him to do another book of the sort he did with Ley, but there is not time. Perhaps next year.

You speak of working together on a book. He thinks *Profiles of the Future* is a good title but you tell him Arthur C. Clarke has already used it. Well,

something else, then, but keep in touch.

BONESTELL'S STYLE is only one approach to one particular science fiction theme, of course. There have been many others: Paul, Powers, Emsh, Frazetta, Freas, Schoenherr, Sternbach . . . a long list. Europe's Karel Thole combines a sense of the surreal with a technique that calls to the mind Escher prints, Magritte inversions and juxtapositions. Odd geometries and even odder people: for Frank Belnap Long's *Lest Earth Be Conquered*, Thole gives us an oil painting of a man whose face opens like a book, his hand riffling through the pages to show beneath and inside his teeth, a pitted fleshscape.

This imagination is central to science fiction art. Mark Adlard and Brian Aldiss have pointed to an arresting quote from a C. S. Lewis essay, a look at the essential quality in fables: "No man would find an abiding strangeness on the Moon unless he were the sort of man who could find it in his own back garden."

True, for the back garden is a feast of life, abounding in mysteries, a savage struggle in a tranquil glen. And science fiction gives us perspectives on all this by the distancing it affords. Bonestell viewing the inferno of Venus; Freas' technicolor stars and worlds; Schoenherr's massive, drama-filled machines and men; Thole's enigmatic telescoping of figures and landscapes—all deliciously personal approaches, tentative steps toward the infinite.

The artists most nearly aligned along Bonestell's particular vector in this decade are probably two Americans, Donald Davis and Rick Sternbach, and though usually more lurid, England's David Hardy. There

is occasionally in their work an incandescent sense of immanence. Viewing it, you sometimes feel that these ghostly worlds and precisely seen objects are mere devices of the artist's inner mind, awkward devices pointing toward an urgent vision. You sense that beyond the skin of things there is a finer realm, a compensating deep. It is the very uncompromising precision of these astronomicals that is their most important message. This quality you sometimes strive for in your own fiction, a sense akin to mystic realism. To pass through the particular, grainy experience of the world and emerge into the other side. To touch the world in its effervescing particulars, rather than in muddy generalities.

It was there in the film of *2001*, this sense. It peeks out at us from Bonestell's work, and from others'. It is one way of communicating a science fiction experience.

THE ONLY science fiction person he sees these days is Heinlein, who lives



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MONTHLY AWARDS!

an hour away on the coast. He likes the Heinlein approach; it seems more honest somehow, closer to the tenuous facts of science. He does not see many artists. Carmel is a center for them but they are mostly dabblers, amateurs. He does not have much interest in the young; he thinks their technique is poor. The test of learning to draw a cow is not in the fingers but in the eye: you must learn to *see* the cow. Few do this today. "Once having seen it, you must draw or paint so that others can see it. Not the thing itself, but the way it seems, that is art. And what else is there?"

—GREGORY BENFORD

Verses For A Golden Age (cont. from page 115)

plunder
Nor leave them now drive us asunder;
In twilight, in nightfall, past night
we'll amble

Protectors of the dream and the spirit
of Campbell.

—BARRY N. MALZBERG

Milk Into Brandy (cont. from page 104)

him down, fragmenting his thoughts.
Another five minutes and he would
fall asleep here at the table.

Painfully he pulled himself erect and with great effort mounted the stairs. They do the best they can; nothing could stay the pace of time forever, and the knees were first to go. The days were far too long and exhausting now, and he wanted them to become shorter and shorter, and the long stretches of the day in the middle, these could all be dropped out.

In the end, the days should be telescoped inward until there's nothing left but the cigars and brandy, with no time between them for hangovers. Just the brandy and cigars, forever and ever, where he could lose himself in those great, bursting sensations that seemed somehow to bring everything to full cycle, and join the end to the beginning in a way he could not quite grasp because he was too sleepy and wanted now merely to rest.

—LIL & KRIS NEVILLE

THE VIEW FROM TITAN

119

Editorial (cont. from page 4)

able sub-branch of literature and as such became a focus for scorn and ridicule, much of which survives even today. (A recent issue of *Newsweek* once again raked sf condescendingly over the coals; the author of the piece was Peter S. Prescott, a man whose low opinion of science fiction was already on record and was surely known to *Newsweek's* editors. But that is a subject for another editorial.) Modern authors of science fiction thirst for literary acceptance and have called for an end to sf's "ghettoization," under the mistaken illusion that this will benefit their own careers. As we shall see shortly, this is happening, and it does not bode well for any of us.

The contempt in which science fiction is held by those outside the field is due not to the fact that the field/genre/ghetto exists, but has been, from the first, caused by the closed minds and shuttered imaginations of those who feel this contempt. There have always been those who scorned visionaries and mocked them, and these people see in science fiction a vision which they cannot accept. In the twenties they mocked not only science fiction as it existed then, but rocketry pioneers like Goddard—with questions like, "Once your rocket goes above the atmosphere, what will it push against?" Their "common sense" told them that interplanetary travel (a theme long identified with sf) was an impossibility and those who believed in it were fools. That attitude, as such, is rare now, but how often have we seen in the news media in reports of manned landings on the moon, probes to Mars and Venus and Jupiter, etc., phrases like "this isn't some sci-fi-fanatic's dream—this is real"? I really can't see much point in arguing with such people; their minds are closed and, like all those who've fettered their imaginations, they are best pitied.

An allied branch of contempt for science fiction associates it with pulp

magazines and argues a sleeziness-by-association which is both historically untrue and unfair to pulp writing in general. (Pulps gave us two of the 20th Century's best American authors, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.)

In fact, science fiction magazines were not "pulp" magazines in any sense for the first four years of their existence—*AMAZING* and the *Wonder* family of magazines (started by Gernsback after he left *AMAZING*) were not published in the pulp format, did not use either the same type of paper or the same size (pulps were smaller) and were not priced as pulps (sf magazines cost more—until the Depression forced cheaper prices and pulp-production methods). It was in 1930 that a pulp publisher launched the first pulp science fiction magazine—*Astounding Stories of Super Science*—a magazine with a much stronger emphasis on action-adventure than upon scientific marvels. It is ironic that, under a later publisher and under the gifted editorship of John W. Campbell, *Astounding* evolved into *Analog*, the least "pulp"ish sf magazine of them all.

During the 1930s the sf magazines fell upon hard times and were eventually surrendered to pulp-chain publishers, but it is significant that even then it was recognized that their readership was not the typical pulp-magazine readership, nor were their authors, with a few exceptions, pulp-magazine writers. Ultimately—in the early 1950s—pulp magazines, as a publishing phenomenon, died and disappeared from the newsstands. But science fiction magazines continued, virtually alone—the last surviving type of magazines still devoted primarily to fiction.

I said that the importance of the creation of science fiction as a genre in magazine form was two-fold. The second aspect of that importance was positive. Even as sf became a literary "ghetto" within the confines of the

science fiction magazines, it developed traditions and began to grow.

When proto-sf was published, before the inception of AMAZING, it had few if any traditions upon which to build. The author might not have even read anything similar to what he proposed to write, and he certainly could not expect his readers to be familiar with the concepts he chose to use. Thus, most—if not all—proto-sf was grounded in mundane reality. The story *began* in a contemporary setting. If it was a story of the future, it began with a contemporary protagonist who had to be transported to the future (the most common device was to fall asleep, as Rip van Winkle did, for hundreds of years). If the story was set on another planet, the protagonist had to be transported there—as John Carter was, for example, by “astral projection.” Each story had to start with the familiar before it progressed to the unfamiliar.

Once AMAZING appeared, this became less and less necessary. Here, in a magazine devoted to science fiction, where the readers *expected* the unfamiliar, traditions began to develop. Authors could easily see what their peers were writing, and when one author came up with a new idea another could elaborate on that idea in a subsequent story. Thus, certain devices and traditions came into existence. It was no longer necessary to invent spaceflight each time an author wanted to write an interplanetary story. In time he could take for granted certain conventions pertaining to spaceflight. When interstellar stories began appearing, authors began cooking up means of travelling faster than light. Today one has only to murmur, “FTL,” or “hyperspace.” The reader understands. Similarly, authors explored the paradoxes of time travel, each building more sophisticated concepts upon the foundations laid down earlier.

Make no mistake: this *did* increase the “ghettoization” of sf. To follow the

stories you had to be increasingly familiar with the concepts employed—you had to know the shorthand. But the benefits were enormous. Nearly every important work of science fiction produced between the years of 1930 and 1960 owes its existence to the previous body of science fiction already in print. And the increasing development of sophisticated skills in the field—the increasing emphasis on style and characterization—were made possible only because there existed a body of literature upon which to build and better. Without Sturgeon, could there have been Zelazny?

If we were to view this process topographically, we might say that proto-sf was a horizontal process, each work existing independently and on the same plane with every other work. With the founding of AMAZING and magazine-sf, science fiction became a vertical process, each work built on top of previous works, all science fiction being funnelled into one vertical area—the medium of sf magazines.

THE DEATH OF the pulp magazines signalled a profound change in the publishing industry. In 1949 Street & Smith, the pioneer publisher of pulp magazines (the company got its start with dime novels), folded its entire pulp line, saving from extinction only one fiction magazine—*Astounding*. Within five years most of the other pulp publishers had followed suit. The reasons were not hard to find: languishing sales, usually blamed on television siphoning off the pulp audience.

The death of the pulps hurt sf magazines incalculably, although few realized it at the time.

There were several factors at work. To begin with, when sf magazines were published by pulp publishers, they fell under the economic umbrella of the entire pulp chain. Advertising, for instance, was sold for the whole

chain, the rates based upon the total circulation of *all* the magazines within the chain—and not by the individual title. (Comics still do this today.) Printing contracts, etc., were negotiated by the chain. When sf magazines were part of large publishing chains their per-unit costs were significantly lower.

Likewise, sf magazines were distributed as part of the pulp chain as a whole. A pulp chain had considerable clout with distributors on both the national and local levels. Most newsstands devoted considerable space to the display of pulps, and readers browsing the newsstands had no difficulty finding them.

When the pulp publishers went under, many (but far from all) sf magazines survived. But most of these were either the products of small independent publishers, or orphans (like *Astounding*) in companies no longer geared toward the production of fiction magazines. The sf magazines survived primarily because their audience had never been the regular pulp audience, and consequently were not lured away by television. But sf magazines by the same token had never had large audiences—100,000 was the maximum in most cases, and a number of early-1950's sf magazines sold from 15,000 to 35,000 copies an issue. This was never a viable circulation; it guarantees breaking even at best and leaves little room for growth. Under the umbrella of a pulp chain such a low circulation was acceptable. Without that umbrella, it was marginal.

This fact became obvious not only to the publishers, but also to the distributors, many of whom declared themselves unwilling to handle such low-profit items. The 1950's witnessed the collapse of the sf magazine field from a high point of over *forty* titles in 1952 to less than a dozen by 1960. The 1959 World Science Fiction Convention became a wake for the field.

WHAT SCIENCE FICTION appeared in book form during the thirties and forties was, with few exceptions, reprinted from the pages of the sf magazines. In most cases these books were published by small houses run by fans or ex-fans—enthusiasts who wanted their favorite stories collected in more permanent form and knew that a small market (a few thousand at best) existed for such books.

In the early 1950's larger publishers joined in. Doubleday began a regular sf program and also launched the Science Fiction Book Club. Soon the specialty houses were out of business. By the late 1950's paperback houses were not only reprinting hardcover sf books—they were publishing original works as well. Ace Books, under Don Wollheim's editorial hand, published three sf novels (two as halves of an Ace Double) every month, many originals. In the early 1960's other publishers—Berkley, Pyramid, Lancer—were following suit.

And at this point the shift in emphasis from magazine sf to book sf began to become apparent. Samuel Delany was discovered not by a magazine editor but by Don Wollheim at Ace. Ursula Le Guin, although first published in *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC*, developed as a novelist at Ace. When I began writing sf, although I made my first sales to this magazine and to *If*, I quickly discovered that it was not only more profitable to write books for Ace, Lancer and Pyramid—it was easier to sell them there. (I tried for magazine serialization on all my early novels, without success). Subsequently the appearance of anthology series like Damon Knight's *Orbit* and Terry Carr's *Universe*—as well as the blockbuster *Dangerous Visions* anthologies—underscored the shift away from sf magazines and into books. Most of the Nebula and Hugo award winners of recent times did *not* appear first in the sf magazines, and a scan of the credits in any recent Best

of the Year science fiction collection will reveal that much if not most of the material has come from anthologies rather than magazines.

The science fiction magazine has been a marginal operation for the past fifteen to twenty-five years. Today there are only five left. How long three of those will survive is anyone's guess. The sales figures continue to drop.

The shift of original material away from the magazines has been brought about primarily by this economic shift, which favors books over magazines. But what this bodes for science fiction is not good.

To put it plainly, we're leaving the "ghetto" at last.

I can hear the authors cheering. Their cheers are not appropriate.

The death of the science fiction magazine, as an institution, is upon us. In practical terms, it has already occurred; the survivors are anachronisms.

Once more science fiction has become a book phenomenon. To return to our topographical view once more, the vertical column is spreading out horizontally again.

No; we'll never go back to the pre-1926 days in terms of content. Science fiction's vocabulary has entered the mainstream of our culture, via comics and *Star Trek*; everyone knows about hyperspace these days. But the fragmentation which once existed is returning. No longer does sf appear within a limited marketplace; no longer can it be easily followed by either its readers or its authors. There are literally hundreds of science fiction books in print these days—all at prices at or over 95¢ a copy—and no one person could hope to keep up with them all. Today sf in book form covers the entire spectrum—from Perry Rhodan to *The Dispossessed*, from the most juvenile to the most adult. But it's a fragmented spectrum, and those who haven't access to sf speciality bookstores are unlikely to

even be aware of all the current releases.

Once again authors are writing in a vacuum. Unaware of what their peers are writing (except for the most notable among them), and unsure of who their readers are. Books don't publish letter columns. The feedback is minimal.

And the *New York Review of Books* is no more likely now to give an sf writer a thoughtful review than it ever was. *Newsweek* still sneers. The walls of the ghetto are crumbling, but the results are not the desired ones.

What's to be done? Unless an angel appears and lavishes great amounts of money upon the sf magazines—an uncertain proposition at best—I don't expect a reversal of the present trend. Science fiction as we've known it is going to change. It's going to become broader-based, require a less sophisticated readership, and become diluted. The traditions may die; they will certainly not be built upon. The best of the new authors will still become known to the inner circle of readers who communicate among themselves—the fans—but the wider audience will find them on a hit-or-miss basis.

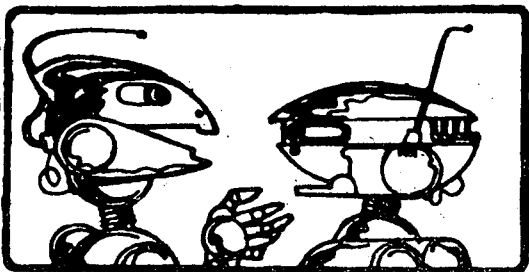
Well, it was a great fifty years. Exciting, exhilarating, and something I'm glad I had the chance to participate in. That's history for you.

POSTSCRIPT: The body of the above editorial formed a speech which I gave in January at ConFusion, the annual Ann Arbor sf convention. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Ro Nagy, Jim Martin and all the rest of Ann Arbor fandom for one of the most enjoyable conventions I've attended in many years. Their thoughtfulness exceeded that of any previous committee with whom I've had dealings; their philosophy of conventioning seems to me exemplary. Thanks, people.

—TED WHITE

**SUSAN
WOOD**

**the
Clubhouse**



“WHY are you here?” asked Jan Sharpe, the elegant blonde from the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

“We’ve come for Aussiecon.”

“Here” was the State Suite on the 15th floor of the Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne, Australia, Aug. 14, 1975. Robin Johnson, chairman of Aussiecon, had hauled me away from helping to register convention attendees to attend a press conference where he was introducing convention notables to each other and to assorted reporters.

The basic “why” translated as “What’s an Aussiecon?” with faint undertones of “Why here?” (Australians are so used to believing that everything important exists in the places where they’re tourists that they find it hard to believe North Americans would want to cross the Pacific and the dateline to see them, their wombats and their Opera House. In fact, they’re most courteous, hospitable to visitors, and have an amazing country. This may be the first time *The Clubhouse* has given a rave review to a continent.)

Since 1939, we explained, and annually since 1946, science fiction fans have gathered at “world” conventions to talk; swap ideas and fanzines; sell each other old pulp magazines; look at masquerade balls, art shows and, especially of late, movies; meet writers who are meeting editors; give each other awards; eat dinner together;

and... anything two fans do together is fanac. This is the 33rd of these “world conventions.” Since it is supposed to be a “world” convention, it has been known to move out of North America, to London and Heidelberg, and so an Australian named John Bangsund thought. . . . Well, yes, of course, we hear writers give speeches, but it’s not really like an academic conference. No, not like the sheepdip sellers’ sale meetings, or the American Legion reunions, either. A former *Clubhouse* writer, John Berry, called it a gathering of the tribes, some think of it as a family reunion. . . but they were puzzled already, these people come to interpret us.

Media coverage of science fiction conventions tends to be sensational. The first Torcon in 1948 earned headlines like “Zap! Zap! Atomic Ray is Passé With Fiends,” and one of the sensational Melbourne tabloids proved nothing has changed—they concentrated on the scanty skirts of the hired models promoting the WANG computers, loaned to the convention for Star Trek games. “Sci-fi.” Sigh.

Most reporters, though, listened with interest as Robin stressed the respectability of science fiction, the educational and cultural nature of the convention, the funds from the Literature Board of the Australian Council to run a writers’ workshop before the con, the videotaping of the convention for schools and libraries. (If

you're interested in sound or video tapes, write to Aussiecon, GPO Box 4039, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, Australia.)

More important, Ursula Le Guin emanated, inspired, intelligent interest in this "Aussiecon."

"I have a question, a serious question to ask you. What on earth are we here for?"

"Well, I think we have come to celebrate."—Ursula K. Le Guin, Guest of Honour speech, Aussiecon, Aug. 14, 1975.

Reporters thought they could understand why Ursula Le Guin had come to Aussiecon: for professional reasons. The Guest of Honour was fittingly chosen: an acclaimed writer of science fiction and fantasy, winner of Hugo, Nebula and National Book awards, author of the Hugo-and-Nebula-winning *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*, the Nebula-winning-and-Hugo-nominated *THE DISPOSSESSED*. She must have journeyed half round the world to accept the admiration of her fans.

Admiration, however, makes Ursula Le Guin nervous. She changes the subject. She was lured from Oregon, en route to London the long way, by the chance to lead a writing workshop for 20 aspiring sf writers. She remained after the workshop, not to lecture to fans, but to share with them her delight in sf: to "celebrate" sf.

"Sf is pretty well grown up now. We've been through our illiterate stage, and our latent or non-sexual stage, and the stage where you can't think of anything *but* sex, and the rest of them, and we really do seem to be on the verge of maturity now. When I say I'd like sf to be self-critical, I don't mean pedantic or destructively perfectionist; I mean I'd like to see more sf readers judging soundly, dismissing the failures quietly, in order to praise the successes joyfully—and to go on from them, to build upon them. That is maturity, isn't it?—a just assessment of your capacities, and

the will to fulfill them. We have plenty to praise, you know. I do think sf during the past ten years has produced some books and stories that will last, that will be meaningful and beautiful many years from now." (Ursula K. Le Guin, GoH speech, Aussiecon.)

Most of us responded enthusiastically; a few people wondered where the fun of reading-forbidden trash would go; and the reporters took notes. But Ms. Le Guin had more to say:

"When I say the ghetto walls are down and it behooves us to step over them and be free, I don't mean that the community of sf is breaking up, or should break up. . . . The essential lunacy that unites us will continue to unite us. The one thing that's changed is that we're no longer *forced* together in a mutually defensive posture—like a circle of muskoxen on the Arctic snow, attacked by wolves—by the contempt and arrogance of literary reactionaries. If we meet now and in the future, we writers and readers of sf, to give each other prizes and see each other's faces and renew old feuds and discuss new books and hold our celebration, it will be in entire freedom—because we choose to do so—because, to put it simply, we like each other."

I'm not altogether sure the reporters (and the attendees) fully understood the uniqueness of that liking.

Thursday, we had panels on "new directions in science fiction" and on science; Friday we talked about art and sf; Saturday found me moderating panels on teaching sf, and on children's fantasy (featuring Ursula Le Guin and Peter Nicholls of England's Science Fiction Foundation—I really enjoyed this one), followed by hardworking Ursula on a panel on myth in sf, then sf criticism, and finally Bob Silverberg reading his own work—a most serious, literary day this, ending with the Hugo banquet; and Sunday had panels on the media

in sf, reading sf, and writing sf: it *looked* like a literary conference. (But what was that panel about "fanzines"—and this item, "The Role of Sheep in SF"—and all the announcements of the Test Match scores—and this "business session" where Orlando won the 1977 worldcon? What's this "fandom"?)

So the reporters assumed they'd dropped into a literary gathering, where Ackerman, Bova, Foster, Le Guin, Silverberg and Tucker had flown in to meet their Australian counterparts like Chandler, Harding, Turner and Wilder, their critics like Nicholls and Foyster. Off they went to interview Captain Chandler (and report, with pride, the presentation of an Invisible Little Man award to him at the banquet): a gentleman dignified, courteous, proud of his craft, and as thrilled as any of us to be at Aussiecon. The papers and the radio didn't report on that last trait. We call it Sense of Wonder. It knows no limits of age or distance; and it unites us.

"Why have you come to Aussiecon—from Perth, and Hobart, and Waiheke Island, N.Z.?"

"To meet science fiction writers, of course."

Aussiecon was, first of all, a science fiction conference, for writers and readers. As such it attracted 604 attending members, some 500 of whom were Australians who had never heard of worldcons or fandom—who probably didn't understand why some 1,400 other fans, most of them North Americans, paid to become supporting members of a convention they couldn't attend. (Even with this support, Aussiecon may have financial problems, especially since Australian hotels, unlike most North American ones, charge for the use of function space.)

These readers, like the reporters, soon learned that what Ursula Le Guin said held true: "we like each other." The sf world tends *not* to split into an elite of Doers, sitting on plat-

forms lecturing, and a supportive mass of Receivers or fans, sitting adulating. Convention: from the Latin, to come together: in order to share.

Chorus of voices: "And when I asked for an autograph, he/she *talked* to me! What a nice person!"

(And some are arrogant bastards, too, but they stayed home this time.)

"Why are you here?"

"Because the fans sent me to you."

Bob Tucker, a First Fandomite, legend, Hugo-winning fanwriter, and admirer of Jim Beam and pretty ladies, is also Wilson Tucker, Hugonominated sf writer. He flew to Aussiecon because a lot of us in the fan community love him; because a lady named Jackie Franke organized "The Tucker Bag," a special fund which collected some \$2,500 from fans to pay his way. During his first panel, on sf writing, he sat silent and fidgeting under the spotlights, feeling that only a handful of us were responding. "They're a cold audience," he complained to me. Since I was to interview him the next day on the programme, we considered the problem. The spotlights for videotaping panels were too bright, the hall too dark: speakers and audience were cut off. Easily remedied. Vital, though, since we wanted to establish the lack of barriers.

"Bob," I said, "I remember my first worldcon. You were up on a stage trading one-liners about 'Rosebud' and 'Courtney's boat' and picnic tables—and I walked out. People kept talking about fandom; I didn't understand, and I was bored. We've got to introduce you properly—as Wilson the writer (Robin didn't make it clear who you are) and Bob the fan, and talk about why you're both."

Introducé fandom-as-a-Tucker creation in 50 minutes? We tried. Soon Merv Binns of Space Age Books was selling out of hardcover editions of *Ice and Iron* and *Year of the Quiet Sun*; the local bottle shops were selling out of Tucker's elixir, Jim Beam; and

Tucker was handing out Rosebud buttons and calling cards to bebies of femmefans. By Sunday, he had a hall full of people on their feet going "smoooooth," an arcane ritual you'll only understand if you attend a con with Bob, Wilson and Jim.

By Sunday, that is, Australia had a lot of people not only delighted to discover somebody else read "that stuff" (remember the thrill?) but also a lot of people happy to discover the subculture of fandom. (A good introduction is Tucker's own *Neofan's Guide*, 25¢ from Linda Bushyager, 1614 Evans Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076.)

"Why are you here?"

"The fans sent me to keep an eye on Bob, there."

Rusty Hevelin (who drinks milk) travelled with his "son" Bob as the Down Under Fan Fund winner. The Fund alternately sends Australians up to visit us, us down to them. For information and ballots, contact Rusty Hevelin at 3023 Troy Pike, Dayton, OH 45404. For \$2.50, he'll sell you a copy of *Emu Tracks Over America*, Leigh Edmonds' account of the Epic Journey he and Valma Brown made from Australia to Discon-II—an excellent look at the US and its fan population.

"Why are you here?"

"Because I'm half of the Fan Guest of Honour."

(That's "honour" with a "u", Ted: this is the Commonwealth. Ta.)

At that press conference, and all through the convention, I was hyper-aware that few people would understand what role Mike Glicksohn and I were playing as "Fan" GoHs. What novel had we written? What had we published? What did we mean, we'd published a fanzine called *Energumen* which won a Hugo, articles from me that won another, and letters from him that made him a legend (though the beard, boa constrictor, bheer and Bill Bowers helped)? What's a "fanzine"? Back to square one.

Mike and I figured that while Ur-

sula represented the professional concerns, and he represented the fans (with a *duty* to sample local brews for them), I was an interface between sf and the subculture of fandom. After organizing a fanhistory display at the Toronto worldcon, I'd had some practice explaining fandom (especially to reporters; with Bob Tucker's help!). Besides—as Robin Johnson and the programme book kept pointing out—I had lovely respectable literary interests, having taught sf and finished off a PhD (now I can go back to reading fanzines). I was able to meet a lot of Australians through that "professional" interest in sf: librarians, teachers, students who wanted to set up sf courses—people like me who wanted to take sf seriously, but not take the joy out of it. (I spent one panel on Sunday trying to have the best of both worlds!)

Yet when I introduced myself, I tried to talk about Susan the fan, about why fandom interests me as much as the sf which lured me into it.

"Why are you here?"

"To have dinner with my friends."

I explained, at the opening ceremonies, that years before when I was a neofan, a friend lent me some amateur sf magazines: fanzines. Most contained discussions of sf, book reviews and such; yet one, *Rataplan*, consisted entirely of someone named Leigh Edmonds in Australia talking about having dinner with someone named John Bangsund, and. . . . "Richard," I complained, "what's going on? This isn't even about sfl! Who cares?"

"Oh," he replied. "That's fannish. You'll understand someday."

So in 1975 I left Regina, Saskatchewan; and I arrived in Melbourne, Australia; and I met Ursula Le Guin at the Nova Mob meeting, and didn't fall at her feet because she said she'd be embarrassed; and the next night I had dinner at Degra's Tavern with Leigh Edmonds, and John Bangsund, and Valma Brown who happens to be a sister of mine,

not by birth but by choice and fandom. And I understood: for me, fandom was a communications network that brought me together with my friends.

It was hardly a unique message, but it was as simple, and honest, as I could make it. At the panel following the introductions, "How to Really Enjoy Yourself at This Convention," Mike and Rusty and the Aussiefen repeated the same thing: "Talk to people. That's why we're here. Talk to people." And we did. From platforms and panels; in groups over coffee, supplied by Discon II, bless 'em, in the lounge outside the meeting room; at the parties by the Magic Pudding Club and the Science Fiction Writers of America (and Australia) and the '77 worldcon bidders; at Leigh Edmonds' pie-and-sauce party, that vast end-of-con tribute to Australian cuisine; in ones and twos and tens: we discussed, debated, disagreed, chattered, gossiped, heavyrapped, and got to know each other. And then we wandered back into the main ballroom to watch Sonar Graphics' unique light-and-sound show, preceding each major programme segment (Aussiecon's most impressive innovation), and listen to someone else talk.

What else is there at a worldcon? There's an art show—Aussiecon's was small but impressive; highlighted by Karel Thole's work—hucksters' tables, selling books and magazines and the like; and auctions of collectable material. There's usually a masquerade, this one capably organized by Shayne McCormack, with your hardworking GoHs to judge the costumes—far simpler than the elaborate North American presentations of late, but fun. A movie programme has become standard; Aussiecon premiered *Solaris* but I was too busy visiting. At larger conventions, there are often two or more concurrent programme items: on sf, fantasy, science, films, writing, editing, fan publishing, anything. Of course, it all leads up to the Hugo banquet, and the presentation of

awards voted on by the members of the convention. Some people fall in love at conventions, and some get pros to autograph their books. Lots of things happen at worldcons. The 1976 worldcon, in Kansas City, may be over when you read this (this column has an erratic publication history), but you can always join the 1977 Suncon, chaired by Don and Grace Lundry, Box 3427, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002.

Anyway, at *this* convention there was an excellent, smoothly-run programme, organized by Bruce Gillespie and Leigh Edmonds. I enjoyed it, and I rarely get around to attending the formal convention events (though I've never felt that I was *on* half the programme before, either). Carey Handfield, one of the committee members, set an example of stunning efficiency by day; and then in the evening, everyone relaxed and actually enjoyed their own convention. Remarkable. I just hope they don't all gafiate. (That's "get away from it all," leave fandom; a feeling you understand after running a worldcon. Or reviewing fanzines for two years.)

Oh yes. A large chunk of my convention was spent talking to reporters. Taping a half-hour programme on Canadian literature (my specialty, one reporter discovered to her delight) was an odd experience, but easier than trying to explain fandom as a subculture to Jan Sharpe for her "New Society" programme.

"But what are you doing here? Talking to your friends—but you're a successful woman, surely you have real friends?"

On Saturday afternoon, I sat trying to tell Jan's tape recorder (because I wasn't reaching Jan) what I valued about fandom: the chance to meet, to become friends (not just acquaintances: friends) with a wide and wonderful circle of people. Look, I said, at the people you found me with today: Bob Tucker, who's a legend, and Jilian Miranda Foyster, who's an Australian schoolgirl and her mum Elizabeth who teaches and paints

lovely watercolours, and John Alderson who raises sheep (and, I thought, I want to get back down to the ballroom and talk to them). But she didn't understand—not even when I turned around and interviewed *her* for an article I'm writing on Australian women (I was busy, this trip, playing pro writer; scholar, too, visiting at University of Melbourne in hopes of coming back).

Young, intelligent, hip, a single mother, Jan complained she had no one to *talk* with, could feel at ease only with a small elite group of people her age who shared her ideas. Yet she couldn't believe that fandom gave me exactly what she lacked, that I had flown here for a sort of giant family reunion. (It has its quarrels, but it's not a bad clan.)

I passed Jan on to Tucker, and went off to interview an advice-to-housewives columnist and the German chambermaid. Not even Mr. Smooth could dent the preconceptions with which she edited me, and Bruce Gillespie, and Eric Lindsay, though. The radio programme presented the stereotype of fans as social misfits, shy, introverted, able to communicate only on paper (some of my second-year English students should be so handicapped!). Shy? Introverted? That raving bunch of lunatics munching daffodils, waiting for the train to Ballarat, and chattering away?

We come together because we value sf. We stay, because we value each other. WE celebrate fandom because it is the bond that holds us together.

Well: when we talked to Malcolm Maiden—frizzyhaired freak, writing for the Australian edition of *Rolling Stone*—about “tribe” and “celebration” and “communications network,” he understood.

And the latest issue of Leigh Edmonds' *Fanew Sletter* reports that sf clubs and fanzines are mushrooming all over Australia. Fans coming together, talking with their friends.

“Why are you here?”

“Because John Bangsund has a bottle of Kaiser Stuhl Bin J426 in his wine cellar for me.”

Several years ago, John Bangsund, Publishing Jiant, wine critic, and all-round legend of Melbourne fandom, proposed that Australians bid for a world convention, inviting Ursula K. Le Guin as GoH. They did. A somewhat erratic career took John away to Canberra, where he became a civil servant, married a charming woman named Sally, and generally Settled Down—except for producing a steady flow of outrageously brilliant fanzines. (John Bangsund, GPO Box 357, Kingston; ACT 2604, Australia.) The cosmic wheels continued to grind, of course, and they brought me, one August night, to sit in John and Sally's living room, curled up by the heater with cat Dylan, sharing conversation and wine with them, and Carey Handfield, and three more North Americans: John Berry, Mike Glicksohn, and Sheryl Birkhead.

Now John Bangsund happens to be one of the best personal journalists (synthesizing ideas, emotion, experience, into words—ok, have you got a name for it?) existing today. Not “existing in fandom.” Existing anywhere—though he chooses to distribute his material through fandom's network. Through that writing, its intelligence and insight and quirky humour, he'd earned our admiration; through it, and our writing, and lots of letters, we'd formed a friendship, which gained an extra dimension as we sat talking with him.

John Berry, in San Francisco in July, figured he couldn't go to Aussiecon: he had just enough money to find a place to live, exist til he could live by writing. “Bangsund has that bottle of Kaiser Stuhl waiting for me,” he explained, as he wrote the cheque to the travel agent. Translation: we have a friendship to confirm in person. This will never happen to any of us again. Translation: impossible in words, possible only in the feeling we

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share as Bangsund pulls out the issue of **AMAZING**, with the *Clubhouse* column in which Berry reviews (glowingly) Bnagsund's *Scythrop* and incidentally (not so glowingly) Mike's and my *Energumen* #10; and the July, 1975, **AMAZING** in which I review (glowingly) Bangsund's *Philosophical Gas* and the defunct *Scythrop*. So we

Two days later, Australia's fabulous femmefan Shayne McCormack was handing us daffodils in Sydney airport, so we could concentrate on something besides the reality of say-

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ing goodbye several months too soon. Fans hugged fans, hiding emotions under the ritual exchange: "See you next year in Kansas City."

"Where're you from?"

"Australia."

"Purpose of visit?"

"To have dinner with my friends."

Oh yes. Eric Lindsay is collecting pre-supporting members (A\$2) for the next Australian worldcon. Sixty or more of us are members already. Sydney Cove in '88? Beaut!

—SUSAN WOOD

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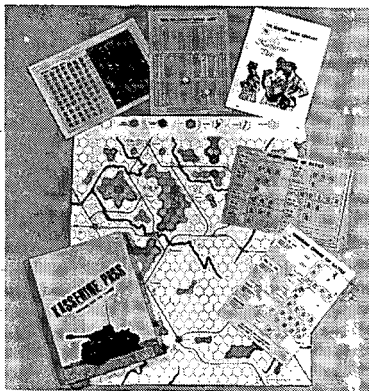
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